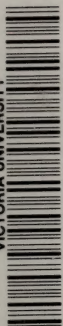
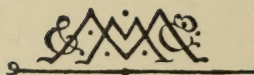


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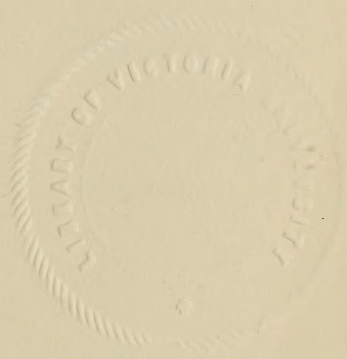
TORONTO

COASTING BOHEMIA

BY

J. COMYNS CARR

AUTHOR OF 'KING ARTHUR,' 'TRISTRAM AND ISEULT,' 'PAPERS ON ART'
'SOME EMINENT VICTORIANS,' ETC. ETC.



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A faint, circular library stamp is visible in the lower-left quadrant of the page. The text within the stamp is partially legible and appears to read "UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO" around the perimeter, with "LIBRARY" at the bottom. The center of the stamp contains some illegible text.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

MANY of the papers which give to the present volume its title first appeared in the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, and are here reprinted by the courteous permission of the proprietors of that journal.

A portion of the essay on Burne-Jones was originally designed as an introduction to the catalogue of an exhibition of his collected works held, shortly after his death, at the New Gallery. The essay on Sex in Tragedy was written on the occasion of Sir Henry Irving's last revival of the play of *Macbeth* at the Lyceum Theatre.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
BOHEMIA PAST AND PRESENT	1
SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS	12
AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA	26
WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK	42
EDWARD BURNE-JONES	56
JAMES M'NEIL WHISTLER	89
THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING AT THE ROMAN EX- HIBITION	101
WITH GEORGE MEREDITH ON BOX HILL	134
THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL	147
SEX IN TRAGEDY	162
HENRY IRVING	199
A SENSE OF HUMOUR	213
SITTING AT A PLAY	227
SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN	242
THE JUNIOR OF THE CIRCUIT	253
BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM	264
INDEX	279

BOHEMIA PAST AND PRESENT

THE papers which compose this volume make no claim to any sort of ordered plan in their composition. They reflect in some measure the varied activities of a life that has been passed in close association with more than one of the arts, and therein lies their sole title to so much of coherence as they may be found to possess.

Lord Beaconsfield once defined critics as men who had failed in art. The reproach, however, is not always deserved, for youth is often confident in its judgment of others at a time when it is still too timorous to make any adventure of its own. For myself I may confess that I had adopted the calling of a critic long before I had found the courage to make even the most modest incursion into the field of authorship. My first essays in journalism, made at a time when I was still a student at the bar, were chiefly concerned with the art of painting, and I look back now with feelings almost of dismay at the spirit of reckless assurance in which I then assumed to

COASTING BOHEMIA

measure and appraise the achievement of contemporary masters. A little later in my career I was brought into still closer contact with the art of the theatre, and in both these worlds, as well as in that of literature itself, I was fortunate in the formation of many valued and enduring friendships which have enabled me, in such of the following chapters as bear a distinctively biographical character, to record my personal impressions of some of the notable figures in the literature and art of the later Victorian era.

The reader who accompanies me in my voyage along the shores of the Bohemia of that time will quickly realise that it is not quite the Bohemia of to-day. Indeed since Shakespeare first boldly conceded to the kingdom a seaboard, each succeeding age, and almost every generation, has claimed the liberty to refashion this enchanted country in accordance with its own ideals. The coast-line has been recharted by every voyager who has newly cruised upon its encompassing seas, and in recent days its boundaries have been enlarged by the occasional incursions of Society which has lately condescended to include the concerns of art within the sphere of its patronage. But although no longer retaining its old outlines upon the map, there is enough of continuity in the character of the inhabitants and in the subjects of their preoccupation to render a brief survey

BOHEMIA PAST AND PRESENT

of earlier conditions of something more than merely archaeological interest. If much has been gained, something also has been lost, and the traveller who survives to set down the experiences of that earlier time may perhaps be pardoned if he cannot always accept the changes which have transformed the face of the country, or modified the mental attitude of its citizens, as improvements upon the prospect that first dawned upon his vision forty years ago.

I read the other day a confident pronouncement made by one of the apostles of the more modern spirit which gave me the measure of the revolution that has been effected in all that concerns our judgment upon matters of art. "Art," declared this authority, "cannot stop : the moment it rests and repeats itself, or imitates the past, it dies." There is here no faltering or uncertainty in the assertion of those principles of faith and criticism which are embodied in the newer gospel, and it took me a little time to steady myself in the face of a declaration which seemed to overturn the settled convictions of a lifetime. But after much pondering my courage returned. I perceived that apart from the underlying truism that life implies movement, and that art as its image must share its vitality, there is nothing here that is not highly disputable or wholly false. Art indeed never stops but it does

COASTING BOHEMIA

not always go forward : the movement perceptible at every stage of its history has been as often retrograde as progressive, and although it can never repeat itself, there have been again and again long seasons of rest when after a period of great productivity the land which has yielded so rich a harvest lies fallow.

But the final clause of the proposition, that imitation of the past heralds approaching dissolution, is demonstrably untrue of every great epoch of artistic activity. A fearless spirit of imitation, born of the worship yielded to the achievements of an earlier time, may, on the contrary, be claimed as the hall-mark of genius, and is indeed most frankly confessed in the work of men of unchallenged supremacy. Raphael exhibited neither shame nor fear in the frank reliance of his youth upon the example of Perugino : the painting of Titian, with an equal candour, confesses the extent of his debt to Giovanni Bellini, and Tintoret, who certainly could not be cited as a man deficient in the spirit of independence, made it his boast that he combined the design of Michelangelo with the colouring of Titian : while of Michelangelo himself we have it on record that in one of his earlier efforts as a sculptor a deliberate imitation of the antique carried him near to the confines of forgery. And when we pass from individuals

BOHEMIA PAST AND PRESENT

to the epoch which produced them, was not the main impulse which governed the movement of the Renaissance inspired by a renewed sense of the beauty that was left resident in the surviving examples of the Art of the antique world? And all later time yields a similar experience. That newly born spirit in modern painting associated with what is known as the pre-Raphaelite movement rested upon the untiring effort of its professors to recapture the forgotten or neglected qualities of the painting of an earlier time, not indeed of the time which was its immediate forerunner, but of that still younger day when by simple means and with technical resources not yet assured, the earlier painters of Italy sought to interpret the beauty they found in nature. The spirit of imitation, conscious and unabashed, was of the very life blood of the movement, and it was in their devotion to that period in Italian painting which preceded the crowning glory of the Renaissance that the artists whose work constitutes the most important contribution to the painting of modern Europe were led to a stricter veracity in the rendering of the facts in nature which they sought to interpret.

But the men who laboured in that day were not greatly affected by the declared ambitions of the present generation. Originality had not yet been accepted as the cardinal virtue in any of

COASTING BOHEMIA

the fields of imaginative production, and the illusion of progress, which may be said to rank as the special vice of the moment, found no place in the teaching of the time. Thinking over this widely desired and much vaunted quality of Originality in art, I was minded to turn to old Samuel Johnson to discover what particular meaning was then attached to a term that is now in such constant use. But my curiosity was baffled, for I discovered to my disappointment that this much treasured word finds no place at all in the pages of his *Dictionary*. The world is therefore free to conjecture in what way, if he were living in this hour, that sane and virile intelligence might have sought to describe it. As applied to matters of art, whether literary or pictorial, he would perhaps have been tempted to define it as "a word in vulgar use employed to indicate a vulgar ambition." But without burdening the great lexicographer with views which the exigencies of the time did not provoke him to express, this at least may be confidently affirmed, that the pursuit of whatever virtue the word implies can have no place in the conscious equipment of any great artist. Certainly it was unknown or unregarded in every great epoch of the past. It is impossible to think of even the least of the mighty race of Florentine painters, from Giotto to Michelangelo,

BOHEMIA PAST AND PRESENT

sparing one foolish moment from the eager intentness of their labour to ponder whether the judgment of aftertime should hail their work as original. That work, in common with all else that is produced in obedience to the impulse which is constantly shaping the beauties of the outer world till they are tuned into harmony with the spirit resident in the breast of the artist, had no need of any spur to production beyond that which is provided by a reverent love and an unceasing devotion, and it survives to prove, if proof were needed, that this boasted attribute of Originality, though it may fitly find a place in the epitaph upon an artist's tomb, never since the world began formed any part in the impulse that governed the work of his hand.

The undue importance now assigned to this coveted quality of Originality is partly the outcome of the illusion to which I have already referred,—that art is in its nature progressive and is in fact constantly and steadily progressing. It must be obvious, however, to any one who has followed the fortunes of the imaginative spirit in the past, that history affords no warrant for any such pretension. In whatever field of artistic industry we choose to enter, in the world of letters no less than the world of art, strictly so called, the testimony of the ages bears witness to the fact that the sense of restless and unceas-

COASTING BOHEMIA

ing movement is not always accompanied by any real advancement. Fate has scattered over the centuries with impartial indifference to the onward march of time those signal examples of individual genius which mark for us the summit of human invention. No one supposes that Dryden was a greater dramatist than Shakespeare because he came later : no one would be so foolish as to suggest that a comparison between Lycidas and Adonais can be decided by reference to the historical position of their authors.

And yet it is not difficult to understand how in our more modern day this illusion of progress has fastened itself upon the judgment and consideration of the things of art. The rapid strides made by science during the last fifty or sixty years, yielding at every step some new discovery to arrest the admiration of a wondering world, has not unnaturally bred an inappropriate spirit of rivalry in the minds of men whose mission it was to deal with the widely divergent problems of the imagination. Indeed it is easy to discern in the literature of the Victorian era that some of its professors were apt to be haunted by the fear that their different appeal might be partly overborne or wholly silenced unless they too could prove to their generation that what they had to offer for its acceptance registered something of a like superiority to the product of earlier times.

BOHEMIA PAST AND PRESENT

The sense of inexhaustible variety, characteristic of all art that truly images the spirit of man, has by a false analogy been confused with the onward march of science where every addition to the accumulated harvest garnered in the past uplifts each succeeding generation upon the shoulders of its forerunner. Art cannot compete on such terms, and any comparison so conducted must relegate its claims to an inferior place ; yet though so much may be freely confessed, it does not therefore follow that its unchanging appeal is to be counted as an unequal factor in shaping the destinies of humanity. The work of the man of science, however pre-eminent the place assigned to him in his generation, must of necessity yield place to the larger discoveries made by even the humblest of his followers ; while the work of the artist, the outcome of individual vision engaged upon the unchanging passions of man and the unfading beauty of the world he inhabits, stands secure against any assault from the future ; in its nature distinct from all that has preceded it as from all that may follow in the time to come. It knows neither rivalry nor competition, for in the temple wherein the artist worships, each worshipper has his separate and appointed place. In the matchless words of Shelley,

Life, like a dome of many coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity,

COASTING BOHEMIA

and although the light beyond to which the artist lifts his eyes is of unchanging purity, the myriad hues through which it is transmitted yields to each separate vision the impress of an individuality which no after achievement can challenge or destroy.

But there are recurring seasons in the history of every art when the worker becomes unduly conscious of the medium in which he labours, and correspondingly forgetful of the truth he seeks to interpret. It was this that Wordsworth had in his mind when he urged upon the poet the necessity of keeping his eye upon the object, and it is not difficult to perceive how easily in the present hour the reiterated demand for Originality, enforced by the vulgar illusion that art to be a living force must be a progressive force, invites the invasion of the charlatan. It would perhaps not be too much to say that the little corner of time we now inhabit constitutes a veritable paradise for the antics of every form of conscious imposture.

But this fact, even if it be conceded, need not greatly disturb us. The patient labour of men more worthily inspired still survives. The more aggressive spirits in every department of art, who in their haste to secure the verdict of the future are eager to cast overboard the hoarded treasure of the past, may find when time's award

BOHEMIA PAST AND PRESENT

comes to be recorded that they have won nothing but the gaping wonder of the fleeting moment. The judgment of posterity refuses to be hustled however loud or shrill the voices that call upon it, and we may take comfort in the thought that the whispered message, perhaps only half audible in its generation, has often been the first to win the ear of the future.

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS

THERE are men in every walk of life who would seem deliberately to shun the outward trappings of their calling. During his later years, when I knew Robert Browning well, it always appeared to me that he was at particular pains not to make any social appeal which could be held to rest on his claims as a poet. The homage that fell to him on that score he accepted as his due, but always, as I thought, on the implied understanding that in the daily traffic of social life the subject should not be rashly intruded. In the many and varied circles in which he moved he made no demand of any formal tribute to the distinguished place he held in the world of letters ; and it was sometimes matter for wonder to those who met him constantly to note with what apparently eager and sincere interest he entered into the discussion of any trivial topic in which it was not to be supposed that he could have been very deeply concerned. Like Lord Byron, whose gifts as a poet he held in no great

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS

esteem, he was rather anxious—at any rate, in the earlier stages of acquaintanceship—that his position as a poet should be regarded as a thing apart ; and he was apt, I think, to be embarrassed by any persistent endeavour to penetrate the outward shard of the man of the world, wherein he preferred to render himself easily accessible to a wide circle of friends, few of whom would have deemed themselves competent to enter into any sustained discussion of literary topics.

Among the painters of his time Millais would, I think, have owned to a like inclination. Neither in his personality nor in his bearing was he at any pains to announce himself to the world as an artist ; and if not in his earlier days, at any rate at the time I first began to know him, he seemed to seek by preference the comradeship of men whose distinction had been won in another field. In self-esteem he was certainly at no time lacking ; he could accept in full measure praise of his own work from whatever quarter it came ; and in that respect he differed from Browning, whose nature seemed to stand in less need of flattery, or even of expressed appreciation. On occasion, indeed, and with only moderate encouragement, Millais could be beguiled into a confession of confident faith in his own powers that might sometimes seem to border on arrogance, but at the worst it was no

COASTING BOHEMIA

more than the arrogance of an overgrown boy, put forward with such genuine conviction as to rob it of all offence. At these times he would give you the impression that, having won the top place in his class, he intended to hold it. He could not readily endure the thought, or even the suspicion, that there was anybody qualified to supplant him, and he was apt to be impatient, and even restive, when other claims were advanced, as though he felt the world was wasting time till it reached the consideration of what he was genuinely convinced was a higher manifestation of artistic power. And yet these judgments upon himself, even when they were delivered in the most buoyant and conquering spirit, never left the savour of pretentious vanity. There was an air of impartiality that I think was genuine, even when his self-esteem was most emphatically expressed, as though he were recording the award of a higher tribunal, in whose verdict his own personality was in no way involved.

And then there was so much that was immediately lovable in the man himself as distinguished from the artist ! I have heard it said by an older friend who knew him in the season of his youth that when, as a mere boy, he quitted the schools of the Academy to begin the practice of his art, he had the face and form of an Adonis,

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS

and his handsome and commanding presence when I first met him, toward the close of the seventies, a man then nearing fifty years of age, made it easy to believe that this record of the charm of his youthful appearance was in no way exaggerated. And yet the frank outlook of the face, with its clear blue eyes, and firm, yet finely-modelled mouth, though it spoke clearly of power and resource, and betrayed in every changing mood of expression the unconquerable optimism of a nature that retained its full vitality to the last, did not, I think, then, or at any time, yield any decisive indication of the direction in which his gifts were employed. Afterwards I learned to find in his features the true index of the finer qualities of his genius, but at our first encounter it seemed to me rather that I stood in the presence of a robust personality that had been bred and nurtured in the free air of the country.

It was always, indeed, easier to think of him as one of a happy and careless company during those annual fishing and shooting holidays in which he so greatly delighted, than to picture him a prisoner in a London studio, arduously applying himself to the problems of his art. And, in point of fact, he always brought something of that sense of breezy, outdoor life into the spacious studio at Palace Gate. Perhaps, if he could have followed his own inclination, he

COASTING BOHEMIA

would have passed a greater part of his life on the banks of the northern river that he loved so well. Quite in the later years of his life, when he was rebuking his old friend and comrade, Holman Hunt, upon a too obstinate indifference to the taste of his time, he said to him : " Why, if I were to go on like that, I should never be able to go away in the autumn to fish and shoot. You take my advice, old boy, and just take the world as it is, and don't make it your business to rub up people the wrong way." Millais's ready acquiescence in the demands of his generation was to some extent an element of weakness in his artistic character, leading him occasionally, as he more than once confessed to me himself, into errors of taste that he was afterwards shrewd enough to detect and candid enough to deplore ; but however far he may on occasion have been led astray towards a certain triviality in choice of subject, this tendency never impugned or injured his integrity as a painter in the chosen task he had set himself to accomplish. The presence of nature, either in human face or form, or in the facts of the external world, proved a tonic that sufficed to restore his artistic conscience, and I do not think he was ever satisfied by the exercise of any acquired facility, for it was both the strength and the weakness of his art that his ultimate success in any particular adventure largely

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS

depended upon the inspiration supplied by his model.

One day we were talking of technique, and I remember Millais, who was at the time in some trouble with a portrait that he could not get to his satisfaction, roundly declared that, for an artist worth the name, there was no such thing as technique. "Look at me now," he said; "I can't get this face right, and it has been the same with me all through my life—with every fresh subject I have to learn my art all over again." Such a confession came well from a man who, from the earliest time of his precocious and marvellous boyhood, had in the native gifts of a painter clearly outpaced and outdistanced the most accomplished of his contemporaries, and yet it was made in no spirit of mock modesty, but out of a clear conviction that an artist's conflict with nature is ceaseless and unending, no matter what degree of mastery the world may choose to accord him.

We first met at the Old Arts Club, in Hanover Square. He was not a very constant visitor there, for his inclination, as I have already hinted, did not often carry him into a mixed company of his fellow-workers; but he occasionally looked in of an evening after dinner, and sometimes I used to walk away with him towards his home in Kensington. In his talk at the club

COASTING BOHEMIA

he was apt to exhibit a genuine impatience of any desponding view of the present condition or the future prospects of English art, and the unbroken success of his own career—for at that time he had long outlived, and perhaps almost forgotten, the struggles of his youth—made it, I think, really difficult for him to comprehend that the arena in which he had won his undisputed place was not the best of all possible worlds. But this overbearing optimism of view was not always entirely sympathetic in its appeal; he was apt to brush aside with imperfect consideration the comparative failure of his less fortunate contemporaries, and it was not until long afterwards that I grew to realise that this apparent indifference to the fortunes of others sprang less from any natural lack of sympathy than from an intellectual incapacity to understand the possibility of real merit failing to secure recognition. Something of an egotism that was at times almost aggressive must indeed be allowed to him—an egotism which I believe left him with a genuine belief that nearly all other ideals than those he followed were misguided, and that lesser achievements than his own scarcely merited prolonged consideration.

But when we had left the club and were alone together in the street the more human and sympathetic side of his character often came into

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS

play. Not that he was, even then, apt to lavish extravagant praise upon his immediate contemporaries, but he could speak often and lovingly of the men with whom he had been brought into association in his earlier days, both in literature and in art, always reverting, in terms of special affection, to his friendship for John Leech, of whom he was wont to say that he was "the greatest gentleman of them all." Dickens, too, he genuinely admired, though the great novelist had failed to recognise the earlier efforts of his genius; and he had many interesting anecdotes of Thackeray, with whom he had been brought into close contact during the time when he was engaged in the practice of illustration, telling me how, during periods of illness, he would be summoned to the distinguished editor's bedside to receive instructions for the drawings he was commissioned to execute for the *Cornhill Magazine*.

It was during one of those talks about Thackeray that he related how he came to make his first acquaintance with the name of Frederic Leighton, in an anecdote which he afterwards told with telling effect, as part of a speech at the Arts Club, on the occasion of Leighton's election to the post of President of the Academy. He recounted how Thackeray had warmly praised the talents of the young painter, whom he had met in Rome, prophesying for him the final

COASTING BOHEMIA

distinction he afterwards achieved ; and Millais confessed how, even then, he had felt a certain measure of jealousy in the novelist's warmth of appreciation, conscious that he already cherished the idea that he himself would one day occupy the presidential chair. And so, indeed, he did, but the honour fell upon him almost too late, when he was already in the grip of the malady that was destined to carry him to the grave. But his reference to the work of other painters, however distinguished, was, as I have already hinted, comparatively rare, and the dominant impression left from all our talks of that time was of a man whose own ever increasing prosperity had left him partially blind to qualities in others that had missed an equal measure of recognition. He could perceive little or no flaw in a world which had accorded to him his unchallenged position.

The finer and gentler side of Millais, half hidden from me then under an overpowering and impenetrable armour of optimism, I learned to know better when, as one of the directors of the Grosvenor Gallery, I assisted in the arrangement of the collected display of his life's work. That was in the year 1886, and I can vividly recall with what easy self-complacency he anticipated the pleasure which he would derive from this long-looked-for opportunity of seeing the

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS

product of many years of labour displayed in a single exhibition. Before the arrival of the paintings themselves, many of which he had not seen from the time they had left his easel, he was afflicted by no trace of the nervous apprehension which I have found not uncommonly betrayed by other artists in similar circumstances. But the triumphant buoyancy of this earlier mood was replaced by many an hour of deep dejection when the works themselves appeared in their place ; and that dejection again was sometimes as swiftly replaced by a spirit of almost unlimited self-esteem as he discovered in some particular example qualities greater than his recollection had accorded it.

The essential charm of the man's nature shone out very clearly during that fortnight of preparation, and the invulnerable armour of self-esteem in which he was wont to appear before the world would sometimes fall from him in an instant, leaving in its place a spirit of humility that belonged to the deeper part of his nature. It was sometimes almost touching to note the mood of obvious dejection in which he would quit the gallery at the close of the day's work, and no less interesting to observe with what alacrity the next morning he would recapture the confident outlook that was a part of the necessity of his being. He would sometimes be in the gallery

COASTING BOHEMIA

half an hour or more before the usual time for the work of hanging to begin, and we would find him on our arrival with his short cherrywood pipe in his mouth surveying with evident satisfaction the pictures already placed upon the walls. And on those occasions he would often run his arm through mine and draw me away to compel my admiration of some forgotten excellence in this picture or in that, the renewed vision of which had sufficed completely to restore his self-complacency.

But these moments of exultation were not long-enduring, and it was an integral part of the fascinating *naïveté* of his character that he could with equal emphasis in the presence of some less desirable performance accuse himself roundly of having slipped into vulgarity and bad taste. There was one thing, however, he never could endure, and that was the suggestion that his latest achievement was not also his best, and this conviction so entirely possessed him that he set himself in very vigorous fashion to the task of correcting what he conceived to be the faults of some of his earlier works. I confess I looked upon this adventure with something approaching dismay, for it was evident enough, though he was in no way conscious of it, that the Millais of 1886 was not the Millais of thirty years before, who had laboured under the influence of earlier

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS

and different ideals. Happily the emphatic protests of one or two of the owners from whom the pictures had been borrowed cut short this crusade of fancied improvement upon which he had embarked, and in one instance, although sorely against his will, he was forced to remove the fresh painting from the surface of the canvas.

Some of the essays of that earlier time of youthful impulse and more poetic design had grown unfamiliar to him. Many of them he had not seen from the date when they first left his studio, and I recall in particular with what eager and yet nervous expectation he awaited the arrival of "The Huguenot," a picture that had served as the foundation of his fame as a young man. I think as he saw it unpacked, with its delicate beauty untarnished by time, that for the moment his faith in the uninterrupted progress of his career was partly shaken. I know at least that his voice trembled with emotion as he muttered some blunt words of praise for a picture which, as he said, was "not so bad for a youngster," and I remember that as it took its place upon the wall, after gazing at it intently for some time in silence, he relit his pipe and took his way thoughtfully down the stairs into the street.

Millais used to contend that, until the advent of Watteau, the beauty of women had found no

COASTING BOHEMIA

fit interpreters in art, and he would cite the example of Rembrandt as showing how poorly the feminine features which he portrayed compared with the lovely faces imaged by Reynolds and Gainsborough. Perhaps he was hardly equipped to deliver final judgment on such a subject, for I do not think he leaned with any enthusiasm towards those finer examples of Italian painting wherein the subtleties of feminine beauty have certainly not suffered by neglect. But these dogmatic assertions of men of genius, if they are not irrefutable in themselves, are often instructive in illuminating the finer tendencies of their own achievement ; and it will remain as one of Millais's indestructible claims to recognition that both in his earlier and in his later time he was able to interpret with matchless power the finer shades of emotional expression in the faces of beautiful women. When the chosen model rightly inspired him—and without that model his invention was often vapid and inert—he could succeed in a degree which no other artist has matched or surpassed in registering not only the permanent facts of beauty in form and feature, but in arresting with equal felicity the most fleeting moments of tender or passionate expression.

In the later days of his life it was at the Garrick Club that I saw most of Millais, for

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLAIS

there, in the card-room, he was to be found nearly every afternoon, and as we both then dwelt in Kensington we often wandered homeward together. The buoyancy of his youth and early manhood never quite deserted him, even at that sadder season, when he was already in conflict with that dread opponent against whom his all-conquering spirit was powerless, and I never heard from him, however great the dejection of spirit he must have suffered, a single sour word concerning life or nature. His outlook on the world was never tainted by self-compassion, never clouded by any bitterness of personal experience, and one came to recognise then, as his life and strength gradually waned and failed, that the spirit of optimism which seemed sometimes unsympathetic in the season of his opulent vigour and virility was indeed a beauty deeply resident in his character, which even the shadow of coming death was powerless to cloud or darken.

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

THE death of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, following only too closely upon the loss of his gracious and gifted wife, finally closed the doors of one of the most delightful houses that overlooked the shores of Bohemia. They both possessed in rare measure the genius of friendship, and to both belonged the fine and generous sympathy of nature which is the abiding secret of true hospitality. And in their case a friendship once formed was steadfastly held. There are men and women not a few, who, as they advance along the path that leads to fame and distinction, contrive to shed the friends and comrades of an earlier day in haste to make room for guests more important or influential. This was never true of Tadema at any period of his career, and those who can recall the earlier Tuesday evenings at Townshend House, which looked across the waters of the canal to the green shade of the Regent's Park, can bear witness that the simplest and most modest of his associates of that time

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

found as cordial a welcome in the more spacious premises which he afterwards built for himself in the Grove End Road.

It was in the year 1877 that I first became an intimate guest at the pleasant weekly receptions at Townshend House, and I remember that what first struck me about them was the delightful sense of ease and informality that the host and hostess contrived to infuse into every gathering. Sometimes the friends assembled might number only a few ; sometimes the rooms would be thronged with all that was most notable in the world of literature and art ; but the party, whether large or small, knew no constraint of dulness, nor were we ever oppressed by that overpowering sense of social decorum which is apt to benumb the best-intentioned efforts of ordinary English hospitality. And, this I think, was due in great measure to an element in Tadema's character that was almost unique.

Shakespeare has told us of the "boy eternal," and many men of distinction have owned and kept that quality to the end of their days. But Tadema went one better, for he retained throughout his life some of the simple impulses and attributes of a veritable child. He had the wondering delight of a child in each new experience as it came within the range of his vision, and there were times when some passing

COASTING BOHEMIA

ebullition of temper would betray something also of a child's wayward petulance. It was characteristic of this side of his nature, which for the rest ranked among the most masculine and virile I have known, that he preserved to the last a child's abiding delight in all forms of mechanical toys. This was a weakness well known to his intimate friends, who, on the annual occasion of his birthday, would vie with one another in presenting him with the most admired achievements of the toy-maker's art. I remember, in particular, a certain ferocious tiger, which moved by clock-work across the polished floor of the studio. Tadema was absolutely fascinated by the antics of this mimic beast, remaining under the spell of its enchantment during the whole of the evening; and whenever a pause in the music permitted it, I could hear the whirr of the wheels of the clock as the delighted owner of this new plaything prepared to start it again upon an excursion round the room.

These birthday parties were occasions fondly cherished by our host. He loved every detail in the little ceremonial that might be arranged for their celebration, and would reckon up with the earnest intentness of a schoolboy over his first sum in arithmetic, the candles set around his birthday cake, that counted the sum of his years. And then followed the inevitable speech

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

proposing his health—a task which usually fell to my lot; whereupon Tadema, who always thought that whatever was done in his honour exceeded in excellence any tribute accorded to another, would stoutly maintain that, as an effort in oratory, it far surpassed any speech he had ever heard made. This naïve delight of his in little things, that remained as a constant element of his character, was linked with a large generosity of nature in all that concerned the greater issues of life. And if he exacted from all who came within the range of his influence the little acts of homage and respect that he thought were his due, there was no one who would so freely place himself at the disposal of those whom he believed he could serve. He loved to gather round him the young students of his craft, ever on the alert to note and welcome new talent as it appeared, and when his counsel or advice was needed, he would spare neither time nor pains to afford the aid and encouragement which his superb technical resources so well fitted him to bestow. I have heard artists of position declare that if they had reached some crux in a picture that proved difficult of solution, there was no one so helpful as Tadema; and this, I think, was due mainly to the fact that his quick sympathy and swift apprehension enabled him at once to appreciate the point of view of the comrade who had sought his advice.

COASTING BOHEMIA

The last of those pleasant Tuesday evenings at Townshend House, which occurred in the spring of 1885, brought with it a certain feeling of sadness that found constant expression as the evening wore on. We had all become deeply attached to the quaintly-adorned dwelling where so many joyous evenings had been passed, and some there were who may have been conscious of a lurking fear lest the more spacious premises that were then in course of re-construction in the Grove End Road should rob these festive gatherings of some part of the ease and intimacy that had hitherto been their most delightful characteristic. Certain it was that for his friends during many months to come, the week would contain no Tuesday worth the name, and as we parted that night I think there was a wide-spread feeling that the new order of things could never rival the old. But such fears, so often justified by experience, proved in this case wholly without foundation, and when, in the autumn of 1887, we were bidden to the richly-decorated new studio, in the construction of which Tadema had taken such infinite delight, it was found that the old spirit of hospitality, unchanged and unimpaired, was able quickly to accommodate itself to its more imposing surroundings.

I had known the house in Grove End Road

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

before it took on the stamp of Tadema's quaint invention and fanciful ingenuity. It had been inhabited by the French painter Tissot during a great part of his residence in England, and I recall a dinner party given by him on an occasion shortly after the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery, at which he announced to me his serious and solemn intention of making a radical revolution in the purpose and direction of his art. Up to that time the pictures of this most adroit of craftsmen had been wholly mundane, it might even be said demi-mundane, in character; but he had been profoundly impressed by the recent display of the works of Burne-Jones, to which the public for the first time had accorded a larger welcome; and it immediately struck the shrewd spirit of Tissot that there were commercial possibilities in the region of ideal art of which he was bound as a practical man to take account and advantage. As he himself naïvely expressed it on that evening: "*Vraiment, mon ami, je vois qu'il y a quelque chose à faire*"; and he forthwith led the way to his studio, where he had already commenced a group of allegorical subjects, to the infinite amusement of his friend Heilbuth, who at that time, I think, knew him better than he knew himself.

In those days, Tadema and Burne-Jones were scarcely acquainted. Their real friendship came

COASTING BOHEMIA

a little later, but when it came it was very genuine and sincere, resting on a certain quality of simplicity which they owned in common and a strong feeling of mutual respect and esteem. Their ways in art lay far asunder, but each knew how to value at their true worth the gifts of the other. From time to time they would both join me in little Bohemian feasts at Previtali's Restaurant in Coventry Street, where we would sit till the closing hours in pleasant converse that was never permitted to be protractedly serious. Tadema generally prefaced the evening with an anecdote which he always believed to be entirely new, and even when its hoary antiquity was not in doubt, Burne-Jones never failed to supply a full measure of the laughing appreciation that was due to novelty. In his more serious moods, however, Tadema's talk was marked by deep conviction and entire sincerity. He never acquired complete mastery over our language, but he could always find the word or phrase that reached the heart of what he wanted to say. In his art, no less than in his views on art and life, he was desperately in earnest, and there was something even in the quality of his voice that aptly mirrored the mind and character of the man. Indeed, to be quite correct, it was not one voice, but two, for sometimes even within the compass of a single sentence the tone would

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

swiftly change from the guttural notes that betrayed his northern origin to those softer cadences that seemed to echo from some southern belfry.

I have often thought that this contrast of intonation in his speech reflected in a measure the dual influences that dominated his painting. By his heart's desire, he belonged to a land that was not the land of his birth and to an epoch far removed from the present. The call of the spirit led him backward and southward—to the streets of ancient Rome and the sunlit shores of the Mediterranean ; but, for all his journeyings, his genius as a painter remained securely domiciled under northern skies. The saving grace of his art, whatever the material upon which it was employed, differed little, indeed, from that which gives its surviving charm to the art of his countryman De Hoogh. Both will live in virtue of their unfailing love of light. It is that, or, at least, that above all else, that will make their achievements delightful and indestructible. "No man has ever lived," Burne-Jones once said to me, "who has interpreted with Tadema's power the incidence of sunlight on metal and marble." And although Tadema left the simple interiors of De Hoogh far behind him in his learned reconstruction of the buildings of antiquity, it was with a temper and

COASTING BOHEMIA

purpose closely allied to that of De Hoogh that he loved to revel in quaintly-chosen effects of light and shade, admitting sometimes only the tiniest corner of the full sunshine from the outer world, just to illumine as with the dazzling brilliance of a jewel the imprisoned half-tones that flood the foregrounds of his pictures.

To those who can look below the surface, this central quality of his genius, which he inherited as part of his birthright, will be found reappearing in unbroken continuity throughout the splendid series of his work that lately adorned the walls of Burlington House. Their fertile invention, and the strong and vivid sense of drama that often moves that invention; the patient industry and wide learning which have served to recreate the classic environment wherein his chosen characters live and have their being—these things would count for little in the final impression left by his art, if he had not carried with him in all his wanderings into the past and towards the south, that vitalising principle of light, which, in hands fitly inspired, is able to bestow even upon inanimate things a pulsing and sentient existence. “There is nothing either beautiful or ugly,” as Constable once said, “but light and shade makes it so.” Alma-Tadema had learnt this secret long ago, when he was little more than a boy, and before he had quitted

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

his native land, and he retained it to the very end of his career.

This is not the occasion to appraise at its full value the worth of Tadema's artistic achievement, nor would even those who are his warmest admirers seek to deny that in many of its aspects it is open to criticism. But at a time when the antics of the charlatan are invading almost every realm of art, his patient and unswerving loyalty to a chosen ideal stands forth as a shining example to all who may come after him. That his powers in the region of design confessed some inherent limitations he himself was entirely conscious. I remember one day when we were discussing the claims of several of his contemporaries, he said to me suddenly, "You know, my dear fellow, there are some painters who are colour-blind, and some painters who are form-blind. Now, Leighton, for instance, is colour-blind, and I—well, I, you know, am form-blind." The criticism was perhaps unduly severe in both directions, but it announced a pregnant truth and proved that he was not unaware of those particular qualities in which his weakness was apt to betray itself.

This was said during the time when Hallé and I were arranging the collected exhibition of his works at the Grosvenor Gallery, and when he had had a full opportunity of passing in review

COASTING BOHEMIA

the gathered achievement of many years' labour. Those days we passed together superintending the process of hanging were wholly delightful, and served to bring out many interesting characteristics of Tadema's nature. When the exhibition was first projected Tadema had laid down a rule for our guidance, which he emphatically declared must not be departed from. "The arrangement," he said, "must be strictly chronological"; for the whole interest of such a collection, as he held, lay in the image it presented of an artist's gradual development. We offered no objection at the time, though we knew well by previous experience that adherence to so rigid a principle was inconsistent with decorative effect; and we were, therefore, not unduly surprised when Tadema appeared one morning with the revolutionary announcement that the chronological arrangement must go by the board; insisting, with the air of a man who had hitherto unwillingly yielded to our pedantic tradition, that the only fit way to hang an exhibition was to make the pictures look well upon the walls.

The last time I met Alma-Tadema was at a little supper party given by Sir Herbert Tree on the occasion of the first performance of *Macbeth*. It was impossible for those who had known him in the days of his full vigour not to

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

be conscious even then that his health was failing. From the time of his wife's death, he had never, indeed, shown the same elasticity of spirit, though with valiant courage he had set himself to take up the broken thread of his life, retaining even to the last that loving and humorous welcome of his friends that had been his unfailing characteristic in happier days. But although admittedly no longer robust, his unflagging interest in the theatre and his friendship for Tree had brought him from home on that evening, and availed to hold him a prisoner for the little impromptu feast that followed the play.

My first experience of Tadema's work for the theatre was on the occasion of the production of Mr. Ogilvie's play of *Hypatia*, when I had persuaded him, at Tree's invitation, to undertake the designs for the scenery and costumes. This is a kind of work to which many gifted painters cannot readily adapt themselves. But Tadema's constructive talent, his rare ingenuity in dealing with architectural problems, and, above all, his unrivalled gifts in contriving diversified effects of light and shade, amply fitted him for such a task ; and the difficulty which some painters experience of yoking their intended design with the interpretative resources of the scenic artists, proved no difficulty to him. He loved their art with all its infinite devices for the production of

COASTING BOHEMIA

illusion, and he knew how to treat them in a spirit of true and loyal comradeship. At the first I had been a little nervous on this score, but, one day, when I asked him how he and the principal scene-painter were progressing, he relieved me of all anxiety upon the matter by the emphatic announcement that he and his associate were in such complete agreement that, as he quaintly phrased it from a peasant formula recalled from the land of his birth, "we are like two hands on one stomach." As the production neared completion, I remember one evening, we were waiting for Tadema, who had been detained by a council meeting at the Royal Academy. The most important scene was ready set, and, as it seemed to us, with really admirable effect ; but when Tadema arrived everything was wrong. He scattered objection and criticism in every direction, sometimes, as I thought, with so little reason that I cast about to discover what could be the source of his discontent. Suddenly I remembered that the hour was late, and that, as he had come straight from Burlington House to keep the appointment, the probability was that he had not dined. I put the question to him, and his answer was immediate, "Of course I have not dined." "Then," I said, "let us dine, and leave the men to put these matters right." The cure acted like magic, for when we re-

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

turned to the theatre an hour later, Tadema readily found a way by which every defect might be set right.

I was associated with him at a later time with several other productions which he made for the stage, notably the *Coriolanus*, in the later days of the Lyceum, and, in a lesser degree as far as my work was concerned, in the *Julius Caesar* presented by Sir Herbert Tree. I think such work was always a pleasure to him, because it brought into play qualities that are not directly involved in the work of a painter. His talent had always a strongly practical side, and it was that which made the construction and perfecting of his own house so keen a pleasure to him. His labours there would, I believe, have remained incomplete even if he had lived for another twenty years. He was always discovering new possibilities that opened the door for fresh improvements, and his knowledge of the details of every craft employed in his service was so exacting and complete that the skilled artificers who laboured for him knew well that they were under the trained eye of a master as well as of an employer.

When I called at his house on the day that brought the news of his death, the quaintly covered way that leads to the front door was girt on either side by a wealth of varied blooms

COASTING BOHEMIA

that had been made ready by his gardener to greet his expected return from abroad ; and then, a few days later, as I stood beside his coffin that had been reverently set down in the great studio, I found it buried beneath an avalanche of flowers, which his countless friends had sent as a last mark of love and affection. And it was, indeed, a fitting tribute to the dead artist ; for Tadema, while he lived, had an absolute passion for flowers. As a painter he would linger with untiring devotion over each separate petal of every separate bloom, and yet with such a sustained sense of mastery in the rendering of their beauty that when the result was complete the infinite mass of perfected detail was found to be firmly bound together by the controlling force of a single effect of light and shade. To a young man who stood beside his easel on a day when he was making a careful study of azaleas that formed an integral part of the design upon which he was engaged, Tadema summed up in a single sentence the spirit in which he constantly laboured : “The people of to-day, they will tell you,” he said, “that all this minute detail—that is not art !” And then, turning again to his picture, he added in his quaint English : “But it has given me so much pleasure to paint him that I cannot help thinking it will give, at least, some one pleasure to look at him, too.” This

AT HOME WITH ALMA-TADEMA

was the spirit of the older men before the pestilent pursuit of originality came to infect the modest worship of Nature, and it will remain as the dominant quality of all art, whether of to-day or to-morrow, that is destined to outlive the passing fashion of an hour.

WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK

PASSING along the Chelsea Embankment a while ago I was reminded by the sight of Rossetti's old house of the number of studios where I was once a constant visitor, which time had long since left untenanted. Millais, Leighton, Whistler, Fred Walker, Cecil Lawson, and Burne-Jones were among the names that crowded upon my recollection ; and thinking of these men and of their work, I could not but be reminded of the changed spirit in which art has come to be regarded in these later days of restless experiment and ceaseless research after novelty of form and expression.

And yet those earlier times of which I am speaking were also marked by conflict and controversy ; for even in the seventies, when I first became actively engaged in the study of painting, the stirring spirit of English Art still throbbed in response to the message that had been delivered by the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood more than twenty years before. It may be a

WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK

fancy, but I hardly think the workers or students of a later generation can quite understand the concentrated eagerness and expectation which awaited each new achievement of that small group of men upon whom the hope of the time had been set. We did not, perhaps, then quite realise that the revolution, so far as they were concerned, was already complete, and that what was to come was not destined to signalise any new or important development of what had already been accomplished.

Millais, Holman Hunt, and Rossetti, the three men who stand as the authentic founders of the pre-Raphaelite movement, had all, in the only sense in which their names still stand in linked association, produced the work by which they will be best remembered. During the twenty years that had passed since the movement took birth, the output of these three men, at first bitterly disputed and sometimes keenly resented, was in a sense the best that any or all of them were destined to give to the world—in a sense, I say, because their after-career, whatever new triumphs it proclaimed, exhibited a partial desertion of the aims which had held them in close comradeship during the brief season of their youth. It is probable that no three stronger or more distinct personalities ever laboured in the pursuit of a common purpose ; and it was there-

COASTING BOHEMIA

fore inevitable that as the years passed they should each assert in separate ways the widely divergent tendencies which at the time I am speaking of were held in subjection to a common ideal. But when it is remembered what their combined efforts had already produced, the result must stand, I think, as a record unmatched in the domain of painting by any contemporary achievement in the art of Europe. Millais had painted and exhibited, among many other and less notable works, "The Feast of Lorenzo," "The Carpenter's Shop," the "Ophelia," the "Huguenot," and the "Blind Girl"; Holman Hunt, whose methods as a painter were not calculated to win such ready acceptance, had none the less firmly established his fame by his picture of the "Light of the World," at first roundly denounced by most of the organs of public opinion, but in the end, as much perhaps by reason of its intense religious sentiment as by its qualities of pure art, achieving through the advocacy of Mr. Ruskin a settled place in public esteem; and Rossetti, although during these years little or nothing had been shown to the world, was already accepted by those of the inner circle who were admitted to his confidence as the chief exponent of the spiritual tendencies of the new movement.

In 1873, when I first made the acquaintance of Rossetti, I knew more of his verse than of his

WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK

painting. The first volume of his poems had been before the world for nearly three years, and it was hardly wonderful that the picturesque beauty of his writing, with its occasional direct reference to paintings and designs of his own, should have stirred within me an eager curiosity to make acquaintance with the pictures themselves. It happened about this time that I gained access to the small but choice collection of Mr. Rae of Birkenhead, which contained several of the most beautiful of Rossetti's works ; and filled with admiration of what I had seen, I had written, over the signature of Ignotus, an article in one of the daily papers containing an incomplete but enthusiastic appreciation of Rossetti's powers. Searching where I could, I afterwards made myself acquainted with some of his designs in black and white ; but still eager for a wider knowledge of a man whose poetic invention had laid so strong a hold upon me, I ventured to address myself directly to the recluse of Cheyne Walk, praying that if he could see his way to grant my request I might be permitted to visit his studio. From that time our acquaintance began. His letter in reply to mine, wherein I had mentioned a project then in my mind of enlarging my brief essay so as to make it more worthy of its subject, already revealed to me some part of that reticent side of his nature

COASTING BOHEMIA

which our later friendship helped me the better to understand.

"My youth," he wrote to me, "was spent chiefly in planning and designing, and whether I shall still have time to do anything I cannot tell." And then, in conclusion, he added: "As to what you ask me about views connected with my work, I never had any theories on the subject, or derived, as far as a painter may say so, suggestions of style or tendency from any source save my own natural impulse."

This letter, dated, as I have said, in 1873, shows how little an artist may be aware what part of his life's work is destined to constitute his enduring title to fame. Still eagerly looking forward, he had already produced the work by which he will be best remembered, for although in years a young man—he was not more than forty-five at the time of our first acquaintance—his progress as a painter was not afterwards destined to record any notable development. "Beata Beatrix," "The Loving Cup," "The Beloved," the "Monna Vanna," the "Blue Bower," and the "Lady Lilith" already stood to his credit, besides the series of water-colours, including "Paolo and Francesca," and the beautiful pen-and-ink design of "Cassandra."

The room into which I was shown on the occasion of my first visit to Cheyne Walk came

WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK

to seem to me as aptly characteristic of the man. It offered few or none of the ordinary features of a studio, and in its array of books around the walls spoke rather of the man of letters than of the painter ; and the careless disposition of the simple furniture, though it bore some tokens of the newer fashion introduced by William Morris and Rossetti himself, made no very serious appeal on the score of deliberate decoration. It was obviously the painter's living room as well as his workshop, and as I came to know it afterwards, remains associated in my mind with many long evenings of vivid and fascinating talk, in which Rossetti roamed at will over the fields of literature and art. But the thing that at once took me by surprise on that first visit was the masculine and energetic personality of the man himself.

From what I knew of his persistent seclusion, and in part, also, from what I had gleaned from the subtle and delicate qualities expressed both in his painting and in his poetry, I was prepared to find in their author a man of comparatively frail physique and of subdued and retiring address. Nothing could be less like the reality that confronted me on that May afternoon, as he stood beside his easel at work upon the picture before him. It was not till much later, and then only by indications half-consciously

COASTING BOHEMIA

conveyed, that I recaptured the picture of Rossetti as I had first found it reflected in his verse and in his painting. Little by little, as I got to know him better, I realised that my fancied image of him did indeed mirror qualities that lay deeply resident in his character ; but at the first encounter it was the dominating strength and vigour of his intellect and the overpowering influence of a personality rich in varied sympathies, that struck itself in vivid outline upon the imagination of the observer.

As our intercourse and our friendship advanced, it was easy enough to comprehend the source of that potent spell which he wielded over all who came within the sphere of his influence. Without any reservation, I may say of him that he was beyond comparison the most inspiring talker with whom I have ever been brought into contact : certainly the most inspiring to a youth, for his conversation, although it sought no set phrase of eloquence, flowed in a stream that was irresistible ; and yet so quick was his appreciation and so keen his sympathy that the youngest man of the company could always draw from him encouragement to speak without fear upon any theme that sincerely engaged him. I have heard him sometimes "gore and toss" without mercy any one who ventured to enter the debate with an empty ambition of display. Of insincerity of

WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK

view, of any mere flimsy preciousness or prettiness of phrase, he was always impatiently intolerant ; but he was equally quick to recognise and to welcome a thought truly held and modestly stated. At such times his ready power of evoking a full and fearless statement of what even the most insignificant of his visitors had to say was scarcely less inspiring than the rich and rounded tones of his own voice, as it glowed in enthusiastic appreciation of some worshipped hero in the field of art or letters. And though his work owns to a concentration and intensity of purpose that would seem sometimes to imply a corresponding narrowness of vision, it was in his work only that such a limited outlook could be said to be characteristic of the man.

That he dwelt by preference on the imaginative side of life, and chiefly chose for eulogy achievements in which the imagination was the dominating factor, is unquestionably true ; but his taste within the wide limits of the region he had explored was catholic and comprehensive to a degree that I have not known equalled by any of his contemporaries. And lest this should seem an exaggerated estimate of the man as I knew him then, I may here quote the testimony of others who stood nearer to him than I did. Burne-Jones, his pupil and disciple, wrote long afterwards : "Towards other men's

COASTING BOHEMIA

ideas he was decidedly the most generous man I ever knew. No one so threw himself into the ideas of the other men ; but it was part of his enormous imagination. The praises he had first lavished upon me, had I not had any inborn grains of modesty, would have been enough to turn my head altogether." And at another time he wrote : "What I chiefly gained from him was not to be afraid of myself, and to do the thing I liked most ; but in those first years I only wanted to think as he did, and all he did and said fitted me through and through. He never harangued or persuaded ; he had a gift of saying things authoritatively, such as I have never heard in any man."

But there is, indeed, no surer testimony to the magic of his personality than is betrayed in the restive spirit with which his two comrades of those earlier days endeavoured afterwards to assert their independence of his influence. Both Sir John Millais and Mr. Holman Hunt, in their later life, went out of their way to try to prove to the world that the pre-Raphaelite movement would have been in no way changed in its direction if Rossetti had not been one of the original group. I often talked with Millais on this subject, and it was easy to perceive that he harboured something almost of resentment at the bare suggestion that the direction of his art

WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK

was in any sense due to the example or teaching of Rossetti ; and of the Millais of later years, who had partly discarded the poetic impulses of his youth, it may be readily conceded that he owed nothing to the man whose art, whether in its splendour or in its decay, was governed always by the spirit of imaginative design.

And equally of Holman Hunt who, in his two long volumes, has so laboriously and so needlessly laboured to vindicate his own independence, it may be admitted without reservation that his kinship with the spirit in which Rossetti worked was transient and almost accidental. But it remains, nevertheless, unquestionably true that during that brief season of close comradeship, the supremacy of Rossetti's genius is very clearly reflected in the work of both. The aftergrowth of talents as great as—and in some respects greater than—his, led each of these men into ways of Art that owned, it may be freely confessed, no obligation to Rossetti ; and of the rich gifts of Millais as a painter, extraordinary in their precocity and developed in increasing power almost to the end of his career, no one could exhibit keener or truer appreciation than Rossetti himself. I recall on one of those nights in Cheyne Walk with what power and fulness of expression he paid willing homage to Millais' genius. " Since painting began," he said, " I do not believe there

COASTING BOHEMIA

has ever been a man more greatly endowed." And then he went on to speak with genuine humility of his own many shortcomings in technical accomplishment, wherein he admitted that Millais stood as the unchallenged master of his time.

Rossetti was the kindest, but most careless, of hosts, and the many little dinners at which I was permitted to be a guest always had about them something of the air of improvisation. Of the actual details of the feast, from a culinary point of view, he seemed to take little heed, and there was something quaint and humorous in the way in which, at the head of his table, he would attack the fowl or joint that happened to be set before him, lunging at it with the carving knife and fork almost as if it were an armoured foe who had challenged him to mortal combat. I remember on one of those occasions an incident occurred that showed in striking fashion the quick warmth of his heart at the sudden call of friendship. We were in the midst of cheeriest converse. Fred Leyland, one of his staunchest and earliest patrons, was of the company, when the news came by special messenger that young Oliver Madox Brown was stricken with serious illness. It chanced that we had been talking of the young man's youthful essays, both in art and in literature,

WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK

and Rossetti had spoken in almost exaggerated praise of the promise they displayed, when the letter was handed to him. He remained silent for a moment, though it was easy to see by the working of his face that he was deeply distressed. "Brown is my oldest friend," he said. "His boy is ill, and I must go to him; but that need not break the evening for you." And then, without any added word of farewell, he left us where we sat, and in a moment we heard the street door close, and we knew that he had gone. For a time we lingered over the table, but Cheyne Walk was no longer itself without the presence of its host. We passed into the studio, where Rossetti was wont to coil himself up on the sofa in preparation for long hours of talk, and we felt as by common consent that the evening was at an end.

The circumstance was slight enough in itself, but I remember feeling afresh how magical and inspiring was the spell he exercised over us all, and I little realised then that this friendship with Rossetti, which had proved so powerful a factor in moulding the intellectual tendencies of my own life, was not destined much longer to endure. For a time, indeed, the old welcome always awaited me, but after a time I thought I detected a certain reserve and restraint in our intercourse which I was unable to explain.

COASTING BOHEMIA

A little later those longed-for invitations to dine at Cheyne Walk ceased altogether, and once or twice when I called the studio door, always open to me heretofore, was closed, on the excuse that the painter was too busily engaged. It was not, indeed, until after his death, that I learnt from his truest and most trusted friend the cause of our alienation.

Rossetti, although he never exposed his own pictures to public criticism, was, like every artist who has ever lived, eager for the praise of those whose praise he valued ; and his nature, already grown morbid under the stress of influences that were undermining his health, was not without an element of jealousy that seemed strangely inconsistent with the tribute he could on many an occasion offer to the work of others. He saw but little of Burne-Jones in those days, but he knew that I saw him often. He knew, also, from my published criticism, that I was strongly attracted to his genius, and although I have heard Rossetti himself speak of his pupil and follower in terms of laudation that could not be surpassed, the thought, as I learnt later, had already begun to poison his mind that my allegiance to himself had suffered diminution ; and he frankly confessed to the friend from whom little in his life was hidden that my presence in Cheyne Walk became to him, for this reason, a source of irritation,

WITH ROSSETTI IN CHEYNE WALK

which, in the condition of his health, he was unable to endure.

Such flaws in a nature so splendidly endowed count for nothing in remembrance of the picture of him that remains to me as I first knew him in the plenitude of his intellectual powers. For a time it seemed as if the great movement at the head of which his name must enduringly remain was likely to suffer eclipse. The taste of later years had taken an entirely different direction, and the ideals which the small band he led had striven so manfully to recapture from a renewed study of nature and a finer understanding of the artistic achievements of the past appeared to have sunk into oblivion. It was therefore a delight to find in Rome in the spring of two years ago how enthusiastic was the welcome accorded to a man who, while he ranks so high among English painters, owned in his veins the blood of Italy and from whose painters, at that bewitching season when the spirit of the Renaissance was in its youth, he had drawn the inspiration which was destined to kindle his own genius.

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

“I THINK Morris’s friendship began everything for me ; everything that I afterwards cared for ; we were freshmen together at Exeter. When I left Oxford I got to know Rossetti, whose friendship I sought and obtained. He is, you know, the most generous of men to the young. I couldn’t bear with a young man’s dreadful sensitiveness and conceit as he bore with mine. He taught me practically all I ever learnt ; afterwards I made a method for myself to suit my nature. He gave me courage to commit myself to imagination without shame—a thing both bad and good for me. It was Watts, much later, who compelled me to try and draw better.

“I quarrel now with Morris about Art. He journeys to Iceland, and I to Italy—which is a symbol—and I quarrel, too, with Rossetti. If I could travel backwards I think my heart’s desire would take me to Florence in the time of Botticelli.”

So Burne-Jones wrote of himself more than

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

forty years ago. It chanced I had just then written a series of papers on living English painters; and, with the thought of their republication, had asked him for some particulars of his earlier career. The scheme, I remember, was never carried into effect; but his answer to my inquiry, from which I have drawn this interesting fragment of autobiography, served as the beginning of a long friendship that was interrupted only by death.

In those boyish essays of mine there was, as I now see, not a little of that quality of youthful conceit that could never, I think, have entered very largely into his composition; and if I recall them now with any sort of gratification, it is mainly because they included an enthusiastic appreciation of so much as was then known to me of the work of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Of Rossetti's art I have already spoken, and perhaps the time has not yet arrived to record a final verdict upon the worth of his achievement as a painter. I have also sought to indicate how irresistible in my own case was the influence of his strongly marked personality, an influence which enabled me the more readily to understand how deep may have been the debt that is here so generously acknowledged. In this matter the witness of his contemporaries is irrefutable. Even though posterity should not accord

COASTING BOHEMIA

to him the unstinted praise bestowed upon his art by those who then accepted him as a master, no later judgment can dispute or disturb the authority he exercised over those who came within the sphere of his personal fascination.

Little wonder then that to the dream-fed soul of the younger painter, whose art as yet lacked the means to fix in form and colour the thronging visions that must have already crowded his brain, the friendship of such a man must have seemed a priceless possession; and although, with the patient and gradual assertion of Burne-Jones's individuality, their ways in the world of Art divided, yet even in that later day each knew well how to measure the worth of the other. Of what was highest and noblest in the art of Rossetti, no praise ever outran the praise offered by Burne-Jones to the man he had sought and owned as his master; and I can recall an evening in Cheyne Walk more than forty years ago, when there fell from the lips of Rossetti the most generous tribute I have ever heard to the genius of the painter who was still his disciple. "If, as I hold," he said, in those round and ringing tones that seemed at once to invite and to defy contradiction, "the noblest picture is a painted poem, then I say that in the whole history of Art there has never been a painter more greatly gifted than Burne-Jones with the

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

highest qualities of poetical invention." Here we have praise indeed ; but there is at least one painter, he whose long life still kept the stainless record of unswerving loyalty to a noble ideal, to whom also Burne-Jones has here owned his indebtedness, who would, I believe, have accepted and endorsed even such a judgment as this. And if an artist's fame lives most sweetly, most securely, in the regard of his fellows, who could ask aught higher of the living or the dead of our times, than that the award of Rossetti should be confirmed and enforced by the painter of "Love and Death" ?

"A picture is a painted poem." Upon that Rossetti never tired of insisting. "Those who deny it," he used to add in his vehement way, "are simply men who have no poetry in their composition." We know there are many who deny it,—many, indeed, who think it savours of the rankest heresy ; for herein, as they would warn us, lurks the insidious poison of "the literary idea." Nor can such warning ever be without its uses. The literary idea, it must be owned, has often played sad havoc in the domain of art. Much, both in painting and sculpture that the world has rightly forgotten or would fain forget, found the source of its failure in misguided loyalty to a literary ideal ; much even that survives still claims a spurious dignity

COASTING BOHEMIA

from its fortuitous attachment to an imaginative conception that had never been rightly subdued to the service of Art.

But though the warning be timely, the definition which it confronts is not on that account to be lightly dismissed. It is true, as Rossetti stoutly maintained, and must ever remain true, of all men who have poetry in their nature. It was true, from the beginning of his career to its close, of the art of Burne-Jones. From "The Merciful Knight" to the unfinished "Avalon," wherein, as it would seem, he had designed to give us all that was most winning in the brightly-coloured dreams of youth, combined with all that was richest in the gathered resources of maturity, his every picture was a painted poem. Nay, more, every drawing from his hand, every fragment of design, each patient study of leaf or flower or drapery, has in it something of that imaginative impulse which controls and informs the completed work. I have lately been turning over the leaves of some of those countless books of studies he has left behind him, studies which prove with what untiring and absorbing industry he approached every task he had set himself to accomplish. And yet, amongst them all, of mere studies there are none. Again and again he went back to nature, but ever under the compelling impulse

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

of an idea, always taking with him an integral part of what he came to capture. That unprejudiced inspection of the facts of nature which, in the preliminary stages of their work, may content those who are moved by a keener and colder spirit of scientific research, he had not the will, he had not the power to make. For every force carries with it its own limitation ; nor would it ever have been his boast that nature owned no more than she was fain to yield to him. If, then, with unwearied application he was constantly re-seeking the support of nature, it was with a purpose so frankly confessed, that even in the presence of the model the sense of mere portraiture is already seen to be passing under the dominion of the idea. At their first encounter the artist's invention asserts its authority over his subject ; and not all the allurements of individual face or form which to men of a different temperament are often all-sufficing, could find or leave him unmindful of the single purpose that filled his mind and guided all the work of his hand.

It is this which gives to the drawings of Burne-Jones their extraordinary charm and fascination. He who possesses one of these pencil studies has something more than a leaf torn from an artist's sketch-book. He has in the slightest of them a fragment that images the

COASTING BOHEMIA

man : that is compact of all the qualities of his art ; and that reveals his ideal as surely as it interprets the facts upon which he was immediately engaged. And yet we see in them how strenuously, how resolutely, he set himself to wring from nature the vindication of his own design. There is no realist of them all who looked more persistently at life, who spared himself so little where patient labour might serve to perfect what he had in his mind to do ; and if the treasure he bore away still left a rich store for others, it is because the house of beauty holds many mansions, and no man can hope to inhabit them all.

“A picture is a painted poem.” Like all definitions that pass the limits of barren negation it contains only half a truth. Like most definitions forged by men of genius it is chiefly valuable as a confession of faith. There is a long line of artists to whom, save in a forced and figurative sense, it has no kind of relevancy. And they boast a mighty company. Flanders and Spain serve under their banner. Rubens and Velasquez, Vandyck and Franz Hals, aye, and at no unworthy distance, our own Reynolds and Gainsborough are to be counted among the leaders of their host. And long before the first of these men had arisen, the tradition they acknowledged had been firmly established. It was Venice that

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

gave it birth. Venice, where not even the commanding influence of Mantegna could hold back the flowing tide of naturalism that rose under the spell of Titian's genius. Out of his art, which contained them both, came those twin currents of portraiture and landscape that were destined to supply all that was vital in the after development of painting in Europe. All that was vital ; for though Religion and Allegory, History and Symbol, still played their formal part in many a grandiose and rhetorical design, these things were no longer of the essence of the achievement. To the painters who employed them, nature itself was already all-absorbing. The true poetry of their work, whatever other claims it may seem to advance, resides in the mastery of the craftsman ; it cannot be detached from the markings of the brush that give it life and being. To wring from nature its countless harmonies of tone and colour, to seize and interpret the endless subtleties of individual form and character—these are the ideals that have inspired and have satisfied many of the greatest painters the world has produced. Who then shall say that Art has need of any other, any wider ambition ?

And yet, as I have said, the house of beauty has so many mansions that no single ideal can furnish them all. Nature is prodigal to those who worship her ; there is fire for every altar

COASTING BOHEMIA

truly raised in her service. And so it happened that while Venice was perfecting a tradition destined for many a generation to sway the schools of Northern Europe, there had risen and fallen at Florence a race of artists, such as the world had not seen before and may haply not see again, who had asked of Nature a different gift, and had won another reward. That imperishable series of "painted poems" which had been first lisped in the limpid accents of Giotto, had found their final utterance in the perfected dialect of Michael Angelo. In the years that intervened many hands had tilled the field; many a harvest had been gathered in: but so rich had been the yield that the land perforce lay fallow at the last; and when Michael Angelo died, Florence had nothing to bequeath that the temper of the time was fit to inherit.

From that day almost to our own the ideal of the Florentine painters has slept the sleep of Arthur in Avalon. Those who from time to time have sought to recapture their secret have gone in their quest, not to the source, but to the sea. They have tried to begin where *Leonardo*, *Raphael*, and *Michael Angelo* left off; to repeat in poorer phrase what had been said once and for all in language that needed no enlargement, that would suffer no translation. They made the mistake of thinking that the forms and modes of art are

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

separable things, independent of its essence ; that the coinage moulded by the might of individual genius could be imported and adopted as common currency ; and so even the most gifted of them carried away only the last faltering message of a style already waning and outworn. To look only to the painters of our own land, we know well what disaster waited upon men like Barry, Fuseli, and Haydon in their hapless endeavours to recover the graces of the grand style ; and even Reynolds, though he never wearied in praise of Michael Angelo, was drawn by a surer instinct as to his own powers into a field of Art that owed nothing to the great Florentine. A truer perception of what was needed, and of what was possible, in order to revive a feeling for the almost forgotten art of design, came in a later time, and was due, as I have always thought, mainly to the initiative of Rossetti. Not because he stood alone in the demand for a more searching veracity of interpretation ; that was also the urgent cry of men whose native gifts were widely different from his, men like the young Millais, who owned and paid only a passing allegiance to the purely poetic impulse which youth grants to all, and age saves only for a few, and then sped onwards to claim the rich inheritance that awaited him in quite another world of Art. But if this new worship of nature was indeed at the time a

COASTING BOHEMIA

passion common to them all, yet amongst them all Rossetti stands pre-eminent, if not absolutely alone, in his endeavour to rescue from the traditions of the past, and to refashion according to present needs, a language that might aptly render the visions of legend and romance.

And this in a larger and wider sense became afterwards the mission of Burne-Jones. This was his life-work—to find fitting utterance in line and colour for dreams of beauty that in England at least had till now been shaped only in verse. And to accomplish his task he was driven, as he has said, to make a method to suit his own nature. The surviving traditions of style could avail him little, for he already possessed by right of birth a secret long lost to them. With him there never was any question of grafting the perfected flower of one art upon the barren stem of another. There, and there only, lurks the peril of the literary idea. But it could have had no terrors for him, who from the outset of his career submitted himself, as by instinct, to the essential conditions of the medium in which he worked, moving easily in those shackles which make of every art either an empire or a prison. Of the visions that came to him he took only what was his by right, leaving untouched and unspoiled all that the workers in another realm might justly claim as theirs. Every thought,

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

every symbol, as it passed the threshold of his imagination, struck itself into form ; he saw life and beauty in no other way. There was no laboured process of translation, for his spirit lived in the language of design ; but labour there must have been, and, as we know, there was, in perfecting an instrument that had been so long disused. To be sure of his way he had to seek again the path where it had been first marked out by men of like ambitions to his own ; and it was by innate kinship of ideas, not by any forced affectation of archaic form, that at the outset of his career he found himself following in the footsteps of the painters of an earlier day.

“If I could travel backwards I think my heart’s desire would take me to Florence in the time of Botticelli.” It was by no accident that he chose this one name among many, for of all the painters of his school Botticelli’s art asserts the closest, the most affectionate attachment to the ideas which gave it birth. Others could be cited whose work bears the stamp of a deeper religious conviction ; others again whose technical mastery was more complete, who could boast a readier command of the mere graces of decoration. But he was the poet of them all. For him, more than for all the rest of his fellows, the beauty of the chosen legend exercised the most constant, the most supreme authority. It was

COASTING BOHEMIA

the source of his invention and the dominating influence which guided every subtle detail of his design. It made his art, as it formed and controlled all the processes of his art, leaving the indelible record of individual and personal feeling upon the delicate beauty of every face that he pressed into his service. It is not wonderful then that the poet-painter of our day should have recognised with almost passionate sympathy the genius of the earlier master, or that he should sometimes have travelled backwards in spirit to the city wherein he dwelt ; and if that longer journey upon which he has now set forth should lead him not to Florence, who is there who shall declare that he may not have met with Botticelli by the way ?

It is no part of my present purpose to offer any laboured vindication of the art of Burne-Jones. That is not needed now. The generous appreciation of a wider circle has long ago overtaken the praise of those who first gave him welcome ; and for others who have yet to learn the secret of his influence, the fruit of his life's labour is there to speak for itself. But in the presence of work that is clearly marked off from so much else produced in our time, it may be well to ask ourselves what are the qualities we have a right to demand, what, on the other hand, are the limitations we may fitly concede to a

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

painter whose special ambition is so frankly avowed. For there is no individual and there is no school whose claims embrace all the secrets of nature, whose practice exhausts all the resources of art. To combine the design of Michael Angelo with the colouring of Titian was a task that lay not merely beyond the powers of a Tintoret. It is an achievement impossible in itself; and even could we suppose it possible, it would be destructive and disastrous. Titian had design, but its qualities were of right and need subordinated to the dominant control of his colour; Michael Angelo used colour, but it served only as the fitting complement of his design; and although the result achieved by both has the ring of purest metal, there is no power on earth that can suffice to fuse the two. These two names, we may say, stand as the representatives of opposite ideals, which have been fixed and separated by laws that are elemental and enduring; and if between these ideals—leaning on the one hand towards symbolism, on the other towards illusion—the pendulum of art is for ever swaying, this at least we know, that it can never halt midway.

And between these ideals Burne-Jones made no hesitating choice. For him, from the outset of his career, design was all in all, and the forms and colours of the real world were in their

COASTING BOHEMIA

essence only so many symbols that he employed for the expression of an idea. His chosen types of face and form are fashioned and subdued to bear the message of his own individuality. No art was ever more personal in its aim, or, to borrow an image of literature, more lyrical in its direction. The scheme in which he chose to work did not admit of wide variety of characterisation, but for what is lacking here we have, by way of compensation, a certainty, an intensity of vision that supplies its own saving grace of vitality. There is nothing of cold abstraction or formal classicism. Though his art affects no mere transcript of nature, and can boast not all the allurements of nature, yet nature follows close at its heels ; and if the beauty he presents has been formed to inhabit a world of its own, remote from our actual world, we are conscious none the less that he had fortified himself at every step by reference to so much of life as he had the power or the will to use. And again we may see that while his mind was bent upon the poetic beauty of Romantic legend, he never suffered himself to depend upon that merely scenic quality that seeks for mystery in vague suggestion or uncertain definition. His design, whatever the theme upon which it is engaged, has the simplicity, the directness of conviction. He needs no rhetoric to enforce his ideas. All

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

that he sees is clearly and sharply seen, with something of a child's wondering vision, with something also of the unsuspecting faith and fearless familiarity of a child.

And, as with his design, so also with his colour. He worked in both at a measured distance from reality, never passing beyond the limits he had assigned to himself, and using only so much of illusion as seemed needful for the illustration of his idea. The accidents of light and shade, with their infinite varieties of tint and tone, which yield a special charm to work differently inspired, were not of his seeking. He would indeed, on occasion, so narrow his palette as to give to the result little more than the effect of sculptured relief; he could equally, when so minded, range and order upon his canvas an assemblage of the most brilliant hues that nature offers. But in either case he employed what he had chosen always with a specific purpose—for the enrichment of his design, not for any mere triumph of imitation. Few will deny to the painter of the *Chant d'Amour* and *Laus Veneris* the native gift of a colourist, but we may recognise in both these examples, and, indeed, in all he has left us, that the painter disposes his colours as a jeweller uses his gems. They are locked and guarded in the golden tracery that surrounds and combines them.

COASTING BOHEMIA

And they may not overrun their setting, for to him, as to all whose genius is governed by the spirit of design, the setting is even more precious than the stone.

These qualities of Burne-Jones's art are not peculiar to him. They find their warrant, as we have seen, in all the work of that earlier school to which he loved to own his obligation. But they were strange to the time in which he first appeared ; and to their presence, I think, must be ascribed no small part of the hostility he then encountered. Something, no doubt, was due to the immaturity of resource which marked his earlier efforts. And he knew that. At a time when his imagination had already ripened, he was but poorly equipped in a purely technical sense ; and although there is no education so rapid as that which genius bestows upon itself, it was long before his hand could keep pace with the pressing demands of the ideas that called for interpretation. But apart from mere technical failure, there was in his own individuality, and still more in the means which he recognised as the only means that could rightly serve him, not a little that was sure of protest from a generation to whom both were unfamiliar. This also he well knew ; and I think it was the clear perception of it which gave him patience and courage to press forward to the goal.

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

And there were times when he had need of both. The critics who saw in his earlier efforts only the signs of affectation greeted him with ridicule. We are reported a grave nation, but laughter is a safe refuge for dulness that does not understand ; and as there were few of the comic spirits then engaged upon art criticism who had the faintest apprehension of the ideal which inspired his art, they found in it only a theme for the exercise of a somewhat rough and boisterous humour. But they never moved him from his purpose ; never, I think, even provoked in him any strong feeling of resentment. His nature was too gentle for that, his strength of conviction too deep and too secure. No one ever possessed a larger quality of personal sympathy ; no one, it might seem, was on that account so much exposed to the influence of others. And in a sense this was so. In the lighter traffic of life his spirit flew to the mood of the hour. His appreciation was so quick, his power of identifying himself with the thoughts and feelings of others so ready and so real, that he seemed at such moments to have no care to assert his own personality. Nor had he ; for of all men he was surely the most indifferent to those petty dues that greatness sometimes loves to exact. That was not the sort of homage he had any desire to win ; and as he put forward no such poor claim

COASTING BOHEMIA

on his own behalf, his keen sense of humour made him quick to detect in others the presence or assumption of mere parochial dignity. Of that he was always intolerant ; indeed, I think there was scarcely any other human failing for which he could not find some measure of sympathy. But although in the free converse of friends his spirit passed swiftly and easily from the gravest to the lightest themes, anxious, as it would seem, rather to leap with the lead of others than to assert his own individuality, it was easy to see how firmly, how resolutely, he refused all concession in matters that concerned the deeper convictions of his life. To touch him there was to touch a rock. Behind the affectionate gentleness of his nature, that was accessible to every winning influence, lay a faith that nothing could shake or weaken. It was never obtruded, but it lay ready for all who cared to make trial of it. In its service he was prepared to make all sacrifice of time and strength and labour. His friends claimed much of him, and he yielded much ; generous both in act and thought, there was probably no man of such concentrated purpose who ever placed himself so freely at the service of those he loved ; but there was no friend of them all who could boast of having won any particle of the allegiance that the artist owed to his art. That was a world in which he dwelt

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

alone, from which he rigorously excluded all thoughts save those that were born of his task ; and though every artist has need of encouragement, and he certainly loved it not less than others, yet such was the tenacity of his purpose, such a fund of obstinate persistence lay at the root of a nature that was in many ways soft and yielding, that even without it I think he would have laboured on patiently to the end.

A mind so constituted was therefore little likely to yield to ridicule. Such attacks as he had to endure may have wounded, but they did not weaken his spirit ; and with a playful humour that would have surprised his censors, he would sometimes affect to join the ranks of his assailants, and wage a mock warfare upon his own ideals. I have in my possession a delightful drawing of his which is supposed to represent a determination to introduce into his design a type of beauty that was more acceptable to the temper of his time. He had been diligently studying, as he assured me, the style and method of the great Flemish masters, and he sent me as earnest of his new resolve a charming design of "Susanna and the Elders,"—"after the manner of Rubens." On another occasion he wrote to me that he felt he had striven too long to stem the tide of popular taste, that he was determined now to make a fresh departure, and that with this view he had

COASTING BOHEMIA

projected a series of pictures which were to be called the "Homes of England." He enclosed for my sympathetic criticism the design for the first of the series. It was indeed a masterpiece. Upon a Victorian sofa, whose every hideous and bulging curve was outlined with the kind of intimate knowledge that is born only of love or of detestation, lay stretched, in stertorous slumber, the monstrous form of some unchastened hero of finance. A blazing solitaire stud shone as a beacon in a trackless field of shirt-front : while from his puffy hand the sheets of a great daily journal had fallen fluttering to the floor. There were others of the series, but none, I think, which imaged with happier humour that masculine type, whose sympathies at the time he was so often charged with neglecting.

For it must not be forgotten that when ridicule had done its work, Burne-Jones was very seriously taken to task by "the apostles of the robust." There are men so constituted that all delicate beauty seems to move them to resentment ; men who would require of a lily that it should be nurtured in a gymnasium ; and who go about the world constantly reassuring themselves of their own virility by denouncing what they conceive to be the effeminate weakness of others. To this class the art of Burne-Jones came in the nature of a personal offence. They raged against

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

it, warning their generation not to yield to its insidious and enervating influence ; and the more it gathered strength the more urgently did they feel impelled to insist on its inherent weakness. But, as Shakespeare asked of us long ago :

How with this rage shall Beauty hold a plea
Whose action is no stronger than a flower ?

They forgot that : forgot that something of a feminine, not an effeminate spirit enters into the re-creation of all forms of beauty ; that an artist, by the very nature of his task, cannot always be in the mood to pose as an athlete. And, even if they had desired to define the special direction of Burne-Jones's art, or to mark the limits of its exercise—limits that no admirer, however ardent, would seek to deny—they need not surely have been so angry.

So at least it seemed to me then. And yet, rightly viewed, the very vehemence of such opposition was in its own way a tribute to his power. Any new artistic growth that passes without challenge may perhaps be justly suspected of being produced without individuality, and certainly such work as his, that bears so clearly the stamp of a strong individual presence, could hardly escape a disputed welcome. It must even now in a measure repel many of those whom it does not powerfully attract and charm ;

COASTING BOHEMIA

for it cannot be regarded with the sort of indifference that is the fate of work less certainly inspired ; it must therefore always find both friends and foes. But so does much else in the world of art that speaks with even higher authority than his. There are many to whom the matchless spell of Lionardo's genius remains always an enigma ; many again who yield only a respectful assent to the verdict which would set Michael Angelo above all his fellows.

We may be patient, then, if the genius of Burne-Jones wins not yet the applause of all. It bears with it a special message, and is secure of homage from those for whom that message is written. They are many to-day, who at the first numbered only a few : they are many, and I think even the earliest of them would say that their debt to him was greatest at the last. In praise and love they followed him without faltering to the close of a life that knew no swerving from its ideal ; a life of incessant labour spent in loyal service to the mistress he worshipped ; and even though he had won no wider reward, this, I believe, would have seemed to him enough.

Painting is perhaps the only art which offers in its practice opportunities of social converse. The writer and musician work alone, or, if their solitude is invaded, it is only by way of

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

interruption. But the practice of the painter's art admits a measure of comradeship, and the progress of his work is sometimes even advanced rather than hindered by the presence of a friend. The element of manual labour that enters into painting leaves the painter free at many points of his work to enjoy friendly converse with the visitor to his studio ; and I have known many an interesting discussion carried on for several hours without the painter ceasing for a moment from his work upon the canvas before him. This might not apply to every stage in the growth and structure of a picture. There are times which demand entire concentration both of brain and hand, and when the painter needs to be as solitary as the poet. But these tenser moments yield to longer intervals wherein the manual element in the painter's calling holds for a season a more dominating place ; and it is at such times that an intimate friend may safely invade the artist's sanctuary.

Some of the most enjoyable hours of my life have been passed in this intimacy of the studio, and it is interesting to recall, as it was always interesting to note, the different ways in which the individuality of the artist expresses itself in the processes of his work—interesting also to observe how the litter of the studio in its varying degrees of disorder reflects something of the mind

COASTING BOHEMIA

of the man. There are studios which seem deliberately fashioned for an effect of beauty—rooms so ornate and so adorned, that the picture in progress upon the easel seems the last thing calculated to arrest the gaze of the spectator. And there are others again, so completely barren of all decoration, and so deliberately stripped of every incident in the way of bric-à-brac or collected treasures, of carven furniture or woven tissue, that were it not for the half-finished canvas, it would be impossible to guess the vocation of its inhabitant. Between these two extremes there is room for every degree of careless or conscious environment ; and although it is not always possible to define the exact measure of association between the workman and his surroundings, the visitor becomes gradually aware of a certain element of fitness in the seemingly accidental accumulation of the varied objects which find their way into a painter's workshop.

It would certainly, however, be erroneous to assume that the disorder of the studio is to be taken as the direct reflex of the habit of an artist's mind. No man, in the conduct of his work, ever surrendered himself to a stricter discipline of labour than Burne-Jones, though his studio in many respects was a model of apparent disorder. No man certainly in his work ever aimed at a

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

more settled and nicely balanced beauty of design supported by deliberate harmonies of colour ; and yet the bare white-washed walls of his studio in the North End Road gave no hint of the coloured glories of the invention that he was seeking to fix upon his canvas ; while the litter that scattered the floor or was unceremoniously hustled into the corners of the room seemed strangely inconsistent with the ordered completeness of design that marked every picture from his hand.

There were few more delightful companions in the studio—none, according to my experience, whose talk leapt with such easy alertness from the gravest to the gayest themes. His almost child-like spirit invited humour ; and yet his lightest moods of laughter left you never in doubt of the sense of deep conviction that lay at the root of his character. As he stood beside you at his work, his figure relieved against three or four half-completed designs, it was sometimes difficult to find the link which joined the lighter moods of his comradeship with the wistful beauty of the faces that he sought to image in his pictures. But almost at the next moment the difficulty would be solved by a sudden transition to a graver train of thought, and before either of us would be well aware of the swift change of tone, our converse had wandered off to the con-

COASTING BOHEMIA

sideration of some larger ideal of art or life. It was a unique attraction of Burne-Jones's studio that it nearly always contained a rich and varied record of his work, for the chosen method of his painting rendered it necessary for him to keep several pictures in almost equal states of progress, each being put aside in turn till the surface of pigment was so fixed and hardened as to render it ready for the added layer of colour which was to form the next stage in its progress.

Very often on these occasions our talk was not directly concerned with painting at all, but strayed away into many worlds of the present or the past. As a painter every artist must stand or fall by his command of the particular aspect of beauty which can be rendered by that art, and by no other. If a picture fails, it is no excuse that its author is a poet. If a poet fails, it is idle to plead in his defence that he is an accomplished musician. What added burdens of the spirit the worker in any art chooses to carry, concerns himself alone; what concerns the world is that the result—whatever other message it may undertake to convey—must be perfect according to the laws of the medium he has chosen. In speaking, therefore, of the deep poetic impulse that lay at the back of all Burne-Jones's achievement in design, I have no thought of seeking to rest the reputation

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

which he will ultimately hold upon any other considerations than those which are proper to the field in which he laboured. He has left enough, and more than enough, to vindicate his high claim to rank among the masters of art, but it is certain, none the less, that his profound interest in those other fields of expression in which the imagination finds utterance, gave him infinite charm as a man.

There was little lovable in literature that he did not keenly love, though in regard to the literature of the past, I think his heart turned by preference to the legendary beauty of the earlier romances, where the story, freshly emerging from its mythical form, may still be captured with equal right of possession by the poet, the musician, or the painter. Great drama, even the drama of Shakespeare, never so strongly appealed to him; and, indeed, I have always noticed in my companionship with painters that in their judgment of the work of the theatre what is most essentially dramatic in drama is not, as a rule, that upon which their imagination most eagerly fixes itself. And yet, in the case of Burne-Jones, it was curious to observe that among the narrative writers of our time the highly dramatised work of Charles Dickens most strongly appealed to him. For Dickens's genius, its pathos, not less than its humour, he

COASTING BOHEMIA

owned an unbounded admiration ; and I suppose there were few of the worshippers of the great novelist, except, perhaps, Mr. Swinburne, who could boast so full and so complete a knowledge of his work. The sense of humour, which was a dominating quality in the character of Burne-Jones, could, perhaps, scarcely be surmised by those who know the man only through his painting. His claims in this regard, which could not be ignored by those who knew him, must always be received with a sense of surprise—even of incredulity—by those to whom he was a stranger. And yet, when he was so minded, his pencil could give proof of it in many essays in caricature ; while in conversation it was an ever-present quality that lay in wait for the fit occasion.

When Burne-Jones spoke of his own art it was always with complete understanding of its many and divergent ideals, and I have heard him appraise at its true value the genius of men with whom he himself had little in common. Among his contemporaries he could speak with generous appreciation of the great gifts of Millais, and of the acknowledged masters of the past. However little their ideals sorted with his own, his power of appreciation was too liberal and too keen to permit him to ignore or to belittle their claims though his heart's

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

abiding-place was as I have said with the Florentines of the fifteenth century.

My visits to Burne-Jones's studio began very early in our acquaintance, and the several errands which took me there varied as time went on. While he was painting his picture of King Cophetua, he asked that my eldest son—who was then a child—should be allowed to serve as model for one of the heads in the picture. I am afraid that, like most children, my boy gave some trouble to the master, who one day rebuked him as being an incorrigibly bad sitter, and the boy, who had been kept standing during the whole of the morning, promptly replied with the indignant inquiry as to whether Burne-Jones called standing sitting—a response that immensely delighted the painter himself, who recognised the justice of the claim by at once releasing him from further service for the day. At a later time I saw much of him in his studio while he was designing the scenery and costumes for my play of *King Arthur*. I read him the play one afternoon while he was at work upon his own great design of King Arthur's sleep in Avalon, in the lower studio, which stood at the foot of his garden; and the task, which he straightway accepted, of assisting in the production of the drama at the Lyceum Theatre, led to many later meetings, at which our talk

COASTING BOHEMIA

turned constantly on that great cycle of romance—one phase of which I had sought to illustrate.

His own mind was steeped in their beauty, as may be seen in his constant recurrence to these legends as chosen subjects for his design, and I fancy it was their common love for this subject in romance which formed one of the strongest links of fellowship between himself and William Morris. I have said that to Rossetti he always confessed his deep obligations as an artist, but there can, I think, be little doubt that of all living comrades it was Morris whom he most loved. Though, as he has himself confessed, they had parted company in regard to some of the problems that beset the artist, in the graver issues of life, no less than in the lighter moods of social comradeship, they were at one to the end. He told me that once in the earlier days of their association they had gone with Charles Faulkner on a boating excursion up the Thames. At that time Morris was apprehensive that he was growing too stout, and at one of the river inns where they had to share the same room the painter conceived the mischievous idea of unduly alarming the poet as to his condition. Morris had retired earlier than the others, and was fast asleep, when Burne-Jones, having procured a needle and thread from the landlady, took a large slice

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

out of the lining of his companion's waistcoat, and then sewed the two sides together as neatly as he could. In the morning Morris was up betimes, and Burne-Jones, still feigning to be asleep, watched with eager excitement the terror and consternation with which the poet sought, in vain, to make the shrivelled garment meet around his waist. The victim of the plot fancied that his increasing proportions had suddenly taken on a miraculous acceleration of pace, and it was not until the smothered laughter of the painter greeted his ears that he was relieved from the panic of anxiety into which he had been suddenly thrown.

Burne-Jones could sometimes, on occasion, be himself the victim of a practical joke, and once when I paid him a sudden and unexpected visit at his little cottage in Rottingdean, I contrived to play, very successfully, upon what I knew to be his horror of the professional interviewer. I announced myself to the servant as an American colonel, who had called as the special correspondent of the *Cincinnati Record*, and on the message being conveyed to her master, she returned, as I expected, with the curt intimation that he was not at home. But he evidently felt that no precaution was too great to be taken in the face of this threatened invasion, for as I crept by the window that looks out on

COASTING BOHEMIA

to the little village green I saw him, in company with his son, stealthily crawling under the table, and when I afterwards returned and announced myself in my own name, he related with childish delight how skilfully he had avoided the attack of the enemy.

JAMES M'NEIL WHISTLER

THE many pleasant hours I spent in Whistler's studio in Cheyne Walk are dominated in recollection by the striking personality of the artist. In physical no less than in mental equipment, he stood apart from his generation, and the characteristic peculiarities of his appearance, joined to the marked idiosyncrasy of his temperament, must remain unforgettable to all who knew him. It is easy indeed to recall the tones of the sometimes strident voice as he let slip some barbed shaft in ruthless characterisation of one or other of his contemporaries: easier still to summon again, as though he stood before me now, the oddly fashioned figure, lithe and muscular, yet finely delicate in its outline, as he skipped to and fro in front of his canvas, now with brush poised in the air between those long slender fingers, seeming, as he gazed at the model, to challenge the supremacy of nature, now passing swiftly to the easel to lay on that single touch of colour that was to record his

COASTING BOHEMIA

victory. It is not so easy, however, to convey in words the intellectual impression left by the agile movement of his mind, as it leaped in sudden transition from the graver utterance of some pregnant thought concerning the immutable laws of his art, to those lighter sallies of wit and humour that found their readiest and most congenial exercise in the half-playful, half-malicious portraiture of men we both knew.

So notable indeed and so notorious became the sayings of Whistler, uttered in such moods of laughing irony, that the more deeply serious side of his nature was apt in his own time to be ignored or even denied. And for this he himself was partly to blame. His own manifest enjoyment in the free play of a ready and relentless wit was apt sometimes to obscure that deeper insight into the essential principles of the art he practised, to which no one on occasion could give a finer or more subtle expression.

No one, surely, perceived more clearly that there is in every art an essential quality born of its material and resting with instinctive security upon its special resources and limitations, without which it can make no lasting claim to recognition. He never forgot that the painter or the poet who ventures to take upon himself added burthens of the spirit which he is unable to subdue to the conditions of the medium in

JAMES M'NEIL WHISTLER

which he works, can find no just defence for the violation of any of the conditions the chosen vehicle imposes, by an appeal to the intellectual or emotional value of the ideas he has sought to express. He looked perhaps with even excessive suspicion upon the interpretation through painting of subjects that suggested any sort of reliance upon the modes appropriate to other arts, with the result that the effects he achieved bear sometimes too strongly the stamp of calculated effort. Science was a word he was very fond of employing with regard to painting, and though it implied a just rebuke to those who were wont to make a merely sentimental appeal, it sometimes fettered his own processes and left upon some of the work he produced rather the sense of a protest against the false ideals of others than of the free and spontaneous enjoyment of the beauty in nature that he intended to convey.

But an artist, after all, is either something better or something worse than his theories, and Whistler was infinitely better. His instinct was sure, and within the limits he assigned to himself he moved with faultless security of taste. If the realm he conquered was not over richly furnished it was at any rate kept jealously free from the intrusion of inappropriate elements. Whatever was admitted there had an indisputable right to its artistic existence, and while he

COASTING BOHEMIA

excluded much that other men, differently gifted, might equally have subdued to the conditions he was so careful to obey, such beauty as he found in nature was at least always of a kind that painting alone could fitly render.

To watch Whistler at work in his studio was quickly to forget that he had any theories at all. Nothing certainly could less resemble the assured processes of science than his own tentative and sometimes even timid practice ; for although the result, when it received the final stamp of his approval, seemed often slight and was always free from the evidence of labour, labour most surely had not been absent, for the ultimate shape given to his design, though it may have represented in itself only a brief period employed in its execution, had in many cases been preceded by unwearying experiment and by many a misdirected adventure that never reached completion at all.

Whistler's talk in the studio was not often concerned with the subject of Art, and even when Art was the topic it was nearly always his own. His admiration of the genius he unquestionably possessed was unstinted and sincere, and if he avoided any prolonged discussion of the competing claims of his contemporaries, it was, I think, in the unfeigned belief that they deserved no larger consideration. He had his chosen

JAMES M'NEIL WHISTLER

heroes among the masters of the past, but they were few, and their superior pretensions, in his judgment, were so manifest that it seemed sufficient to him to announce their supremacy without further parley as to the inferior claims of their fellows. The position they occupied in his regard was as little open to argument as the place of incontestable superiority he was wont to assign to himself in his own generation. I remember once, when a friend in his presence rashly ventured to accuse him of a lack of catholicity in taste, Whistler in swift response admitted the justice of the charge and excused himself on the ground that he only liked what was good.

But there were causes, apart from the convinced egotism of his nature, which led him by preference towards other topics of conversation. He has written in his lectures and in his letters both wisely and wittily of the proper mission of painting; so wittily, indeed, that his humour and satire are apt sometimes to obscure the sound and serious thought which, on this subject, coloured even his most playful utterances. For, underlying all he said or wrote, was a conviction he took no pains to conceal—that the principles of Art, together with its aims and ideals, were the proper concern only of artists and could scarcely be debated without impropriety by that

COASTING BOHEMIA

larger and profaner circle whose praise and appreciation, however, he was by no means disposed to resent. At times he was even greedy of applause, and provided it was full and emphatic enough, showed no inclination to question its source or authority. There were moments, indeed, when, if it appeared to lack volume or vehemence, he was ready himself to supply what was deficient.

It was partly therefore upon principle that he forbore to discuss at any length subjects with which he deemed the layman had no proper concern ; partly also because in intimate conversation his innate and powerful sense of humour so loved to assert itself that he wandered, by preference, into fields where it found unfettered play. And so it happened in the long and intimate talks in the studio, while he was at his work, he loved to speak of things that belonged to the outer world, and to let his wit play vividly, sometimes mischievously and even maliciously, upon the qualities and foibles of his friends. Here he was never reticent, and so relentless were his raillery and his sarcasm that one was sometimes tempted to think that his acquaintances, and even his friends, only existed for the purpose of displaying his powers of attack and annihilation. I remember very well, when he was decorating what afterwards became

JAMES M'NEIL WHISTLER

known as the "Peacock Room" in Mr. Leyland's house, that I used often to visit him at his work, and sometimes shared with him the picnic meals which a devoted satellite would prepare for him in the empty mansion. He was certainly very proud of the elaborate scheme of blue and gold ornament he had devised, but I believe this unalloyed admiration of his own achievement was scarcely so great or so keen as his delighted anticipation of the owner's shock of surprise when he should return to discover that the handsome and costly stamped leather, which originally adorned the walls of the apartment, had been completely effaced to make room for the newly fashioned pattern of decoration. He already scented the joy of the battle that impended, and this added a peculiar zest to his labours in the accomplishment of a purely artistic task. As he had hoped so indeed it happened, and in the long controversy and conflict that ensued, he found, I believe, the most perfect and unalloyed satisfaction.

His nature, in short, at every stage of his career was impishly militant, and whereas other men are so constituted as to desire peace at any price, there was with Whistler scarcely any cost he deemed too great to secure a hostile encounter. To baulk him of a controversy was to rob him of his peace of mind, and so deeply

COASTING BOHEMIA

implanted in him was the fighting spirit that he was sometimes only half conscious of the wounds he inflicted. Certain it is that, the lists once entered, he was relentless in attack, and availed himself without scruple of any weapon that came to his hand. And yet even in his most saturnine sallies there was an underlying sense of humour that yielded to the onlooker at least a part of the enjoyment that he himself drew from the encounter; while his after recital of the tortuous ingenuity with which he had whipped a harmless misunderstanding into a grave estrangement was always irresistible in its appeal.

But though pitiless in combat, Whistler was not without a chivalrous side to his nature. He was fond enough, to use his own expression, of "collecting scalps," but his tomahawk was never employed against members of the gentler sex. His manner towards women was unfailingly courteous and even deferential. In their company he laid aside the weapons of war, exhibiting towards them on all occasions a delicacy of sympathy and perception which they instinctively recognised and appreciated. It set them at their ease. They felt they could listen with interest and amusement to his recital of those fearless and sometimes savage contests with the male, in complete security from any danger of the war being carried into their own country.

JAMES M'NEIL WHISTLER

They were conscious, in his presence, of an enduring truce between the sexes: a truce so artfully established and so chivalrously conceded as to arouse no suspicion that they were being treated with the indulgence due to inferiors. There was, indeed, in his own character and personality something of the charm, something also of the weakness, that is commonly supposed to be exclusively feminine. The alertness of his temperament betrayed an intuitive quickness in identifying himself with the mood of the moment that found in them a ready response; and his natural vanity, though it might sometimes seem overpowering to members of his own sex, was so exercised as to leave no doubt that he still held in reserve a full measure of the admiration which was due to theirs.

Even as a craftsman there was something delicately feminine in Whistler's modes of work. I have often watched him at his own printing-press when he was preparing a plate of one of his etchings, and it was always fascinating to follow the deft and agile movements of his hands as he inked the surface of the copper and then, with successive touches, graduated the varying force of the impression to be taken. Here, as I used to think, his method seemed more assured, his alliance with the mechanical resources of his art more confident, than when he was struggling

COASTING BOHEMIA

with the subtler and more complex problems of colour.

I have already spoken of those physical peculiarities with which he had been liberally endowed by nature. They were such as to make him a marked figure in any company in which he appeared, and, so far from being a source of embarrassment to himself, he regarded them as a substantial asset to be carefully cultivated and artfully obtruded upon public notice. He even went so far as to enforce and emphasise what there was of inherited eccentricity in his personal appearance. The single tuft of white hair which lay embedded in the coiling black locks adorning his brow, he regarded with a special complacency and pride; and I was amused one evening in Cheyne Walk, while I watched him dressing for dinner, to observe the infinite pains he bestowed upon this particular item of his toilet. It was already past the hour when we should both have been seated at our friend's table, but this fact in no way abbreviated the care with which he cultivated and arranged this unique feature in his appearance.

And yet it would be wrong, perhaps, to ascribe the delay only to vanity, because to be late for dinner was with Whistler almost a religion. Certain it was, however, that he took a childish delight in any little studied departures

JAMES M'NEIL WHISTLER

from the rules of ordinary costume. At one time he ostentatiously abandoned the white neck-tie which was the accepted accompaniment of evening dress ; at another, a delicate wand-like cane was deemed to be a necessary ornament to be carried in his walks abroad ; and yet again he would announce an approved change in fashion by appearing in a pair of spotless white ducks beneath his long black frock-coat. These calculated eccentricities induced in the minds of the crowd the conviction that Whistler deliberately sought a cheap notoriety, and it must be conceded, even by those who recognised the serious side of his nature, that he exhibited at times a strange blend of the man of genius and the showman. And yet this admission might easily be made to convey a false impression. He was in a sense both the one and the other, but their separate functions were never merged or confused. Till his task as an artist was completed no man was more serious in his purpose or more exacting or fastidious in the demands he made upon himself. There was nothing of the charlatan in that part of him which he dedicated to his work ; and it was not until the artist was satisfied that he availed himself of such antics as attracted, and perhaps were designed to attract, the astonished attention of the public.

One charge that was often urged against him

COASTING BOHEMIA

by his enemies, arose out of the singular choice of titles for his pictures. But it was not, I think, in any spirit of affectation that he elected to describe some of his works in terms only strictly appropriate to music. His "Harmonies" and his "Nocturnes," though they seemed at the time to indicate a certain wilful perversity, had in reality a true relation to principles in Art which he was earnestly seeking to establish. It has been rightly held of music that, in its detachment from the things of the intellect and its independence of defined human emotion, it stands as a model to all other modes of expression by its jealous guardianship of those indefinable qualities which are of the essence of Art itself. And in a sense it may be said of Whistler that he discharged a like function in the realm of painting. For all appeal made through other means than those strictly belonging to the chosen medium he had neither sympathy nor pity. It was for the incommunicable element in painting, incommunicable save through the unassisted resources of painting itself, that he was constantly striving, and it was his revolt against all alien pretensions that led him to seek and to adopt the analogy of music wherein the saving efficacy of such elements is never questioned.

THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING AT THE ROMAN EXHIBITION¹

THE British Section of the International Fine Arts Exhibition, to the study of which these pages are designed to serve as introduction, may claim to possess one or two features of exceptional interest. It is the first time that in any exhibition held outside the British Isles a serious endeavour has been made to illustrate the progressive movement of the English school of painting. The works of English painters have time and again been shown in the different capitals of Europe, and it is no longer possible to allege that the masters whose achievements we prize are unknown beyond the limits of our own shores. But the present occasion is the first wherein a serious and successful experiment has been made to render the chosen examples of the art of the past truly representative of the birth

¹ This essay, which served as introduction to the Catalogue of the English Section of the Exhibition of Fine Arts at Rome, is reprinted by the courtesy of the Exhibition Branch of the Board of Trade.

COASTING BOHEMIA

and growth of modern art in England and of the distinctive developments of style which have marked its history. And it is peculiarly fitting that this connected panorama of English art should be offered in the capital of a kingdom to whose example the art of every land has at some time owned its indebtedness. If it be true that every road leads to Rome, it is no less true that, since the dawn of the Renaissance, the footsteps of the artists of all northern lands have worn the several ways that make for Italy ; and it will be seen, as we come to trace the story of painting in England, that, not only in its earlier appeal but again and again in the successive revolutions of style and method that have marked its progress, it has found renewed encouragement and fresh inspiration in the splendid and varied achievements of the great Italian masters, from Giotto to Michael Angelo, from Bellini to Tintoretto.

The history of painting in England precedes by more than a century the history of English painting. The force of the Reformation had unquestionably the effect of suddenly snapping the artistic tradition. At an earlier time England could boast of a race of artists who, as the illuminated manuscripts of the period clearly show, were able to hold their own with the most perfect masters in that kind that Europe

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

could show ; but with the advent of the Reformation the imaginative impulse of our people found a different channel. The strength of our Renaissance sought expression in our literature, and for a considerable period we became and remained indebted for all expression of pictorial design to a race of foreign artists who enjoyed the hospitality of our land. Even before the Reformation was complete Holbein had found a home at the English Court, and at a later period Rubens and his great pupil Van Dyck were invited to our shores. They brought with them to England the great tradition in portraiture that may be traced back to Italy—a tradition having its spring in the style and practice of the masters of Venice, whose devotion to Nature survived as an inheritance to Northern Europe when the more imaginative design of the school of Florence had fallen into decay.

It may be said of all modern art in whatever land we follow its story, that its master currents flow in the direction of portrait and landscape, and it was in these twin streams that the English school, when a century later it came into being, was destined to prove its acknowledged supremacy. But the realistic spirit which from the first had stamped itself upon the great Venetians, even at a period when they seemed to be labouring wholly or mainly in the service

COASTING BOHEMIA

of religion, had gathered in its passage towards our shores yet another impulse, which found its first expression in the art of the Low Countries.

Of the painting of *genre*—that art which dwells lovingly upon the illustration of the social manners of the time—there is already a hint even in Venice itself; but it was in Holland that it first claimed a separate and secure existence; and it was to the examples in this kind, perfected by the Dutch masters, that we owe the achievement of the great painter who may be claimed as the founder of the modern English school. That school may be said, indeed, to date from the birth of William Hogarth. English painters—not a few—had practised before his time, but their work only followed, without rivalling, that of foreign contemporaries under whose influence they laboured. Hogarth was the first who by the independence of his genius gave the seal and stamp of national character to the pictorial illustration of the manners of his age. It was the fashion at one time to dwell almost exclusively upon Hogarth's qualities as a satirist, to the neglect of those more enduring claims which are now conceded to him as a great master of the art he professed; but the criticism of a later time has repaired that injustice, and Hogarth takes his place now not merely in virtue of the social message he

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

sought to convey, but even more by reason of his great qualities as a colourist and a master of tone. Not that we need underrate or ignore those dramatic elements by which he still makes so strong an appeal to our admiration. It is rare enough, even among the supreme painters of *genre*, to find so faithful, so penetrating an insight into character. Of all the great Dutchmen whom he succeeded Jan Steen alone can, in this particular, claim to be his rival; and although the English school is specially rich in the class of composition which his genius and invention had initiated, there are none of all those who have practised in a later day who would not still own him as their master.

The two examples secured for the present exhibition show Hogarth at his best, both as a painter and as an inventor. "The Lady's Last Stake"—contributed by Mr. Pierpont Morgan—even when our admiration has been glutted by the rich evidence it affords of Hogarth's unrivalled control of a kind of truth that might have found expression in an art other than the art of the painter, still draws from us the unstinted homage due to a great colourist whose chosen tints are submitted with unfailing skill to every delicate and subtle gradation of tone; while in "The Card Party," lent by Sir Frederick Cook, where these qualities are not

COASTING BOHEMIA

less clearly announced, we are left at leisure to follow and appreciate the unflagging observation which registers every detail that serves for the dramatic presentation of the chosen theme.

From the time of Hogarth to our own day this particular style, which he may claim to have originated, has never lacked professors. As it passed into the hands of Wilkie satire is softened by sympathy, the foibles of character are touched with a gentler and more tender spirit, and the adroitly ordered groups, with which he sometimes loves to crowd his canvas, tell, in their final impression, of the presence of a kind of sentiment, sometimes perhaps even of a measure of sentimentalism, which scarcely came within the range of Hogarth's fiercer survey of life. And, again, in the later work of Orchardson sentiment and satire have both yielded to another ambition that was content to render with unfailing sympathy and distinction of style the finer graces of social life. In the superb picture of "The Young Duke" we may note how clearly the gifts of the painter dominate the scene, his eye ever on the alert for the opportunities of rich and delicate harmonies supplied by every chosen accessory of costume and furniture; and no less eager to exhibit and to record by means of the subtle resources of his art those finer shades of social breeding that

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

the subject suggests. In this power of granting a nameless dignity to the art of *genre*—a dignity resident in the painter which by some strange magic he contrives to confer upon the people of his creation—Sir William Orchardson sometimes recalls the art of Watteau, who indeed remains unrivalled in his power to perceive and his ability to register those slighter realities of gesture and bearing which give to the rendering of trivial things a distinction which only style can bestow.

It is interesting to turn from this characteristic example of Sir William Orchardson's style to the work of an elder contemporary in the person of Frith. The two artists—though both may be said to be engaged in the same task—make a widely contrasted appeal. With the former, whatever other message he may intend to convey, the claims of the painter stand foremost. We are conscious of the controlling influence of the colourist and the master of pictorial composition before we are permitted to study or to enjoy the human realities that he has chosen to depict. With Frith, on the other hand, it is the human element in the design that first arrests our attention. Gifts of a purely artistic kind he undoubtedly possessed, as the example here exhibited sufficiently proves—gifts which at one time criticism tended to ignore or

COASTING BOHEMIA

to undervalue ; but it remains finally true nevertheless that it is as a student of manners, presented in a form sometimes recalling the arts of the theatre, that Frith makes his first appeal to our attention. In this respect he claims kinship with Hogarth himself, whose influence, I doubt not, he would have been proud to acknowledge.

“Coming of Age in the Olden Time,” necessitating, by the choice of its subject, the employment of historic costume, illustrates only one aspect of Frith’s varied talent, and he will perhaps be best remembered by such works as “The Railway Station” and “Ramsgate Sands,” where he is called upon to render with unflinching fidelity those facts of contemporary dress in which painters differently gifted find no picturesque opportunity ; and whatever may be Time’s final judgment upon Frith’s claim in the region of pure art, it cannot be questioned that such richly peopled canvases must for ever remain an invaluable record of the outward realities of the generation for which he laboured.

The historic side of *genre* painting is further illustrated in the present collection in the person of Maclise, who, like his great forerunner William Hogarth, was attracted again and again by the art of the theatre. But Maclise brought to his task certain larger qualities of design and composition which he had won from the study

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

of the great masters of style ; and although he never achieved the highest triumphs in the region of the ideal his efforts in that direction left an impress upon his painting that served to distinguish it from the achievements of those who laboured in obedience to a more modest tradition.

The English theatre has attracted the talent of a long line of artists, some of whom, like Clint, are little known in any other sphere. Perhaps the greatest of them all (if we except the name of Hogarth himself) was Johann Zoffany, whose paintings, admirable in the rendering of incident and character, are even more remarkable for his great qualities as a colourist and his perfect mastery over the secrets of tone. As a student of the theatre he may perhaps be seen to best advantage in the several fine examples in the possession of the Garrick Club ; but Lord O'Hagan's picture of Charles Townley the collector, presented in his library with his marbles, asserts with convincing force his right to rank among the great painters of his time.

Among other pictures in this category whose high claims deserve a fulness of consideration which the exigencies of space alone forbid me to grant, I may mention the Eastern study by Lewis, the "Dawn" by E. J. Gregory, and the

COASTING BOHEMIA

group of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle by John Pettie.

I have hinted already that in the brief story of our national school of painting we are constantly reminded of the abiding splendours of the art of Italy, and even in the work of men whose genuine victories were won in another sphere there are constant echoes of the larger language moulded by the great masters of the south. For although, at the first, it is only in the allied departments of portrait and landscape that the art of England claims and owns unquestioned supremacy, yet in the career of the gifted painter who may be said to have first firmly established our claim to rank among the schools of Europe we are not allowed to forget the glorious victories of the Italian Renaissance.

It has been sometimes alleged of Sir Joshua Reynolds's occasional experiments in the grand style that their failure to rival the masters he most admired proves how futile were his studies in that branch of art in which he could never hope to excel. But this, I think, is to take only a shallow and superficial view of the factors that make for excellence in any chosen field of artistic endeavour ; for if Sir Joshua's essays in ideal design now fade into insignificance by comparison with the solid and enduring work he achieved in portraiture, it remains none the less true that

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

the study of those great models towards which his ambition led him has served to grant to his interpretation of individual face and form a measure of added dignity and power that could have been won from no other source. His sketch-book—preserved in the Print Room of the British Museum—while it forms an interesting record of his sojourn in Italy is no less instructive as illustrating his untiring devotion to those great masters who laboured in a realm of art that his own genius was never destined to inhabit ; and there is something infinitely touching in the concluding sentences of his valedictory address to the students of the Royal Academy wherein, while frankly confessing his own failure, he reiterates his undiminished admiration of the greatest of the great Florentines. “It will not,” he says, “I hope, be thought presumptuous in me to appear in the train, I cannot say of his imitators, but of his admirers. I have taken another course, one more suited to my abilities and to the tastes of the time in which I live. Yet, however unequal I feel myself to that attempt, were I now to begin the world again I would tread in the steps of that great master. To kiss the hem of his garment, to catch the slightest of his perfections, would be glory and distinction enough for an ambitious man. I feel a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable

COASTING BOHEMIA

of such sensations as he intended to excite. I reflect, not without vanity, that these discourses bear testimony of my admiration of that truly divine man ; and I desire that the last words I should pronounce in this academy and from this place might be the name of Michael Angelo."

In the same year in which these words were uttered there is yet another reference to his earlier ambitions which is scarcely less pathetic. Writing to Sheridan, who desired to purchase the beautiful picture of St. Cecilia, for which Mrs. Sheridan had served as the model, he says :

" It is with great regret that I part with the best picture I ever painted ; for though I have every year hoped to paint better and better, and may truly say '*Nil actum reputans dum quid superesset agendum*,' it has not been always the case. However, there is now an end of the pursuit ; the race is over, whether it is won or lost."

The judgment of Time has left the land that owned him in no doubt that the race had been worthily won. The prize awarded to him by the acclaim of subsequent generations was not perhaps the prize he coveted the most ; and yet if the goal towards which he set his feet was never reached, the time spent in the study of the great masters of the past affords no story of wasted ambition. For without the example of those

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

great masters he loved to study, his own achievement would have been shorn of certain elements of greatness which have served to place him foremost in the ranks of the portrait painters of his time.

In certain styles of painting we are rightly modest in asserting the claims of the English school, but in that goodly list of artists at whose head stands the name of Sir Joshua we may boast a national possession which the art of the time could scarcely rival and most assuredly could not surpass. Europe was then in no mood to take over the rich inheritance of the great Florentines; the successful study of the principles they had expounded had to wait the coming of a later day; but in those departments wherein the art of Europe was still vital England certainly was, at that time, not lagging behind her rivals. Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Hoppner, Raeburn—what names in the contemporary art of the Continent can be cited as their superiors in those branches of painting which they cultivated? Disparagement is no part of the business of criticism, and the victories of one land assuredly take nothing from the triumphs justly won in another. France, too, at that epoch could boast gifted artists greatly distinguished in various fields; but when it is remembered that Watteau, the most distinguished of French

COASTING BOHEMIA

colourists, had died two years before Reynolds was born, the outburst of artistic activity, which the men whose names I have cited heralded to the world, may well be viewed as a phenomenon almost unparalleled in the modern history of painting. For it is as colourists, in the truest and highest sense of the term, that the English school at this period of revival makes its claim to supremacy ; and it was here that the teaching of Italy—not as expounded through the work of the Florentines, but rather as it travelled northwards, carrying with it the surviving splendours of the Venetians—found a full and worthy response from these gifted exponents of our native art.

The present collection is rich in finely chosen examples of the masters I have named. Reynolds boasted to Malone that he had painted two generations of the beauties of England, and as we turn from the “Kitty Fisher,” lent by the Earl of Crewe, to the portrait of “Anne Dashwood,” or to that of the “Marchioness of Thomond,” from Sir Carl Meyer’s collection, we may well own that no man was more rightly equipped for the task that had fallen upon him. No man save perhaps his rival, Thomas Gainsborough, who, in the alertness and delicacy of his observation as well as by a natural affinity with the gentler sex that was born of a sweet and gracious dis-

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

position, seemed specially destined to interpret with loving fidelity the lightest no less than the most characteristic realities of feminine beauty. In weight and dignity of style, the outcome, as I have already hinted, of a diligent study of the great models of the past, in masculine grip and gravity of interpretation, displayed more especially in the portraiture of the most distinguished men of his time, Reynolds, it must be conceded, remains even to this day without a rival in our school. But in the native gifts of a painter Gainsborough owned no superior, and it would be difficult to trace to any individual master of the past, or indeed to any other source than his inborn love of nature, those peculiar qualities of sweetness and grace which set the finest achievements of his brush in a category of their own. A measure of kinship with the great Dutchmen may be discerned in his earlier essays in landscape—a branch of art which he may be said almost to have founded in England; and the final words with which he took leave of the world, “We are all going to heaven and Van Dyck is of the company,” give warrant for the belief that even in portraiture he would willingly have owned his allegiance to the famous pupil of Rubens; but in his actual practice as a portrait painter his own modest and yet commanding personality quickly effaced

COASTING BOHEMIA

all record of indebtedness to any other influence than his own inspiration.

It would be easy, if space permitted, to institute an interesting comparison between his own accomplishment and that of his contemporary Sir Joshua. The same personalities sometimes figure upon the canvases of both. The winning beauty of Miss Linley's face, employed by Sir Joshua in his picture of St. Cecilia, had no less strongly attracted the genius of Gainsborough; and here, as well as in the rendering of the features of Mrs. Siddons, we may note the divergent gifts which these painters separately brought to their task and the varying and matchless qualities which nature surrendered ungrudgingly to both. Speaking generally, it may, I think, be conceded that Gainsborough's art registered with greater felicity those fleeting graces of gesture and expression that would sometimes escape his more serious rival; while Reynolds, constantly pre-occupied by the intellectual appeal made by his sitter, was perhaps more apt to dwell in the features he portrayed upon those deeper and more permanent truths that would serve to mirror mind and character.

That Gainsborough's vision was not, however, limited to forms of female beauty is shown clearly enough by the several notable examples here exhibited. His portraits of John Eld and

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

Dr. William Pearce, no less than the head of the artist himself, prove that he could acquit himself nobly even when he was not engaged in the more sympathetic task of presenting with faultless grace the lovely women of his time ; while Lord Jersey's "Landscape and Cattle" affords sufficient evidence of what the school of English landscape owes to his initiative.

Of the other distinguished masters of portrait in the century in which these two great names stand pre-eminent we find here adequate representation. Romney is not always faultless as a colourist, nor does his draughtsmanship yield the searching penetration displayed by Reynolds or the more delicate apprehension of the finer facts of expression which constitutes so large a part of Gainsborough's ineffable charm ; but judged at his best, and art may justly appeal against any less generous verdict, he takes his rightful place by the side of both. How good was his best may be seen in Mr. Pierpont Morgan's fine full-length of Mrs. Scott Jackson, as well as in the group of Mrs. Clay and her child, lent by Mrs. Fleischmann. But Romney had one sitter whose beauty overpowered all others in the appeal it made to the artist, and it is therefore fortunate that the collection includes a portrait of Lady Hamilton, whose fame may be said to be inseparably linked with

COASTING BOHEMIA

his own. She, too, in her own person awakens echoes from Italy, for it was at Rome she won the admiration of Goethe in those dramatic assumptions of classical character that are preserved for succeeding generations in Romney's constantly repeated studies of the face he worshipped.

From these three commanding personalities, which yield brightness to the dawn of our English school of portraiture, we advance by no inglorious progression to the masters who, though now deceased, belong of right to our own day. Hoppner, the younger contemporary of the men I have named, whose career carries us into the next century, is here superbly represented in the contributions from Mrs. Fleischmann and Lord Darnley. Raeburn also, whose masculine and sometimes rugged genius speaks to us with the accent of the north—Raeburn, who at the instigation of Sir Joshua journeyed to Italy to study the great Italian masters—is here seen at his best in the splendid portrait of "The MacNab," lent by Mrs. Baillie-Hamilton; while near by we find characteristic examples of the art of his fellow-countrymen, Allan Ramsay and Andrew Geddes. Sir Thomas Lawrence may be said to have brought to a close the tradition established by Reynolds, and his practice may therefore be held to form a link

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

with the more modern school. His claims here receive justice in the two portraits lent by Lord Bathurst and Lord Plymouth ; nor is the collection without worthy specimens of the art of Opie, whose practice frankly confesses the example and influence of Sir Joshua himself. Among the portrait-painters of the younger day, in whose ranks may be counted Frank Holl and Frederick Sandys, Brough, and Furse, two names stand pre-eminent. Watts and Millais in their different appeal register the high-water mark of portraiture during what may be called the Victorian era. The former owned in common with Sir Joshua an unswerving devotion to the great traditions of Italian painting, and may claim equally with Sir Joshua to have won for his work in this kind an imaginative quality legitimately imported from the study of ideal design. Millais stands alone. Of both I shall have to speak again in respect of other claims which their art puts forward, but the position of Millais as a painter of portrait is as independent in its appeal as that of Gainsborough himself.

The incursions into the realm of ideal and decorative art made by English painters of the eighteenth century may not be reckoned among the accepted triumphs of our school. Barry, Fuseli, and Haydon, all alike inspired by high ambition and capable, as was shown by their

COASTING BOHEMIA

untiring devotion and sacrifice in the cause they had espoused, lacked the means and the endowment to appear with any solid measure of success to an age that was in itself unfitted to receive the message they sought to convey. The untutored and undisciplined genius of William Blake affords an isolated example in his time of a true and deeper understanding of the secrets of the kind of art which these men vainly pursued ; but even if Blake had possessed more ample resources as a painter he would none the less have spoken in a language that was strange to the temper of his time ; and it was reserved for a later day to forge the means which would secure a genuine revival of the forgotten glories of imaginative design.

The movement associated with the name of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood stands as a landmark in the modern history of our school, nor has it been without lasting influence upon the art of Europe. In the year 1848, which gave it birth, the outlook for painting which aimed at the presentation of any imaginative ideal was not encouraging. Etty, a painter of genuine endowment, still survived, and his unquestioned gifts as a colourist are plainly asserted in the single example included in the present exhibition ; but the practice of his later years, as Holman-Hunt has justly observed, scarcely

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

offered the most fitting model to a young artist of serious ambition. On the other hand, the waning accomplishment of men who had passed their prime cried aloud for the need of a new return to nature ; and the accepted conventions of style, either in themselves outworn or else imperfectly revealed by hands enfeebled and grown old, left the hour ripe for the advent of that small but greatly gifted group of young men whose rebel practice was destined to leave so strong an imprint upon their own and succeeding generations. It would perhaps be difficult to find three painters of equal power whose art was so differently inspired and whose achievement was destined to take such separate and widely divergent forms as Holman-Hunt, John Millais, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who stand as the acknowledged heads in this new movement ; but their efforts, at the time of which I am speaking, were bound together by a common purpose which prevailed then and has since continued to keep their names linked together in the modern history of our English school. In protest against the fetters imposed upon painting by the tradition of the past—fetters that were by common consent only to be removed by a renewed return to the facts of nature—they trod, in the season of their youth, the same road, although the ultimate development of their separate person-

COASTING BOHEMIA

alities led them, before many years passed, into paths widely divergent from one another. To judge Rossetti's talent justly from works collected on the present occasion we must group together the examples in oil and water-colour. The religious phase in his career is indicated by "The Annunciation of the Virgin," lent by Mrs. Boyce; while the freedom with which his imagination afterwards roamed over those great legends already made memorable in literature is shown by the "Mariana" and the "Dante meeting Beatrice" among the paintings in oil, and perhaps even more conclusively in the exquisite water-colour drawing of "Paolo and Francesca," lent by Mr. Davis, which may be accepted as a capital instance of his unrivalled power to render the truths of human passion without violating the laws inherent in the art he professed. In his water-colours even more decisively than in his paintings in oil Rossetti clearly announces his great claims as a colourist; and his paintings bear this distinctive mark in their invention of colour that the ordered harmonies he can command are not only beautiful in themselves but that their beauty stands in clear and direct response to the nature of the chosen subject. In this regard assuredly neither of the two men who stand associated with him in the Pre-Raphaelite movement can claim to be his

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

superior. It is perhaps unfortunate for purposes of comparison that the range of Millais's talent is here not completely represented. "Sir Isumbras at the Ford" is indeed a characteristic example of his earlier period, though it hardly shows the qualities he could then command in the same degree of perfection as would be rendered by the presence of "Lorenzo and Isabella" or of "Christ in the Carpenter's Shop." We have, on the other hand, in the "Black Brunswicker" a notable example of that transitional period in Millais's art wherein the claims of fancy and invention and the overmastering gifts of the realist—gifts that afterwards availed to set him as the greatest portrait-painter of his time—are held in momentary balance; and we may find herein expressed an element of Millais's painting which had already received supreme embodiment in the famous picture of "The Huguenot." No artist of his time—perhaps no artist of any time—has ever excelled him in the rendering of certain phases of human emotion that transfigure without disturbing the permanent beauty of feminine character. This power remained to him to the end of his career, and it was the perception of it which caused Watts to write to him in 1878, in regard to "The Bride of Lammermoor," which had received deserved decoration in Paris: "Lucy Ashton's mouth

COASTING BOHEMIA

is worthy of any number of medals." It is impossible to say in the presence of work of this kind how much has been contributed by the model, how much conferred by the artist ; but that the artist's share in the result is predominant is proved by the fact that nobody else has combined in the same fashion the portraiture of individual features with the most delicate suggestion of the emotion that moves them. In the art of Holman-Hunt, always masculine in its character and marked by the signs of indefatigable industry, emphasis is so evenly laid upon all the confluent qualities that contribute to the result that it is hard to signalise or to describe the dominating characteristics of his personality. In his treatment of religious subjects he showed a constant reverence that nevertheless scarcely touched the confines of worship ; for the same earnestness of purpose, the same reverent research of truth, asserts itself no less in whatever subject engages his brush. Rare qualities of a purely pictorial kind nearly all his work may claim, and yet it is not always possible to concede to the result, however astonishing in its power, that final seal of beauty without which Art's victory can never be deemed absolutely complete. "The Scapegoat," here exhibited, was fiercely disputed at the date of his first appearance, and it is even now not difficult to understand that its appeal

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

must have seemed strange to the temper of the time ; but there can be no barrier at any rate to the generous appreciation of the noble qualities displayed in the " Finding of the Saviour in the Temple " or the austere simplicity and sincerity of " Morning Prayer."

Around these three men who bravely heralded the new movement in English art are grouped the names of others who in different degrees were equally inspired by the principles the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood sought to enforce. For although their earlier efforts encountered bitter attack from the accredited organs of public opinion, they met at the outset with warm response from within the ranks of art itself. The company of their followers at first, indeed, was small ; but the quickened spirit of the time had already been in part prepared for the reception of the message they bore. The writings of John Ruskin, in whatever degree his particular judgments upon art matters may be disputed, had already availed to stir the conscience of his generation and to restore to art its rightful place in life. Henceforth it was not possible to think of painting as a thing of mere dilettantism, serving only to minister to the trivial demands of the taste of the hour. He proved to the world that at every season when art has held a dominating place its spirit has been fast linked

COASTING BOHEMIA

with the heart and life of the people ; and the deep earnestness which in *Modern Painters* he brought to the task of historical criticism found a ready reflex in the more serious and concentrated intensity of feeling which coloured the work of men of the younger school.

William Dyce, by his declared devotion to the painters of the Quattrocento, had already in part anticipated the practice of the Pre-Raphaelites ; and Ford Madox Brown, here represented both as a painter of portrait and as a master of design, though never formally enrolled in the brotherhood, claims by the inherent qualities of his work a prominent place in the revolution that was then in progress. He had been Rossetti's first master, and to the end of his life, as I can testify, Rossetti retained for him the warmest affection, and Holman-Hunt's somewhat ungracious protest that the direction of his art would have clashed with the aims the Pre-Raphaelites had then in view must be surely deemed unconvincing in the presence of his great picture entitled "Work," wherein an unflinching reliance upon nature is the dominant characteristic. Frederick Sandys, here admirably represented by the portrait of Mrs. Clabburn and by "Medea," showed even more conclusively in his varied work in design his right to be reckoned side by side with the leaders I have

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

named ; while Burne-Jones, who always generously acknowledged his indebtedness to Rossetti, displayed as his powers developed a kindred attachment to the kind of beauty in painting which finds its well-spring in the art of Florence. The water-colours in the present collection represent him at a time when Rossetti's example and influence were still dominant, but "Love among the Ruins," lent by Mrs. Michie, and "The Mirror of Venus," from the collection of Mr. Goldman, reveal to us the painter in the plenitude of his powers, when with full mastery of resource he revelled in the interpretation of themes of imaginative significance. A great colourist in the sense in which the Florentines use colour—a great designer, gifted from the outset with the power of striking into symbol forms of beauty that might equally serve to fire the fancy of a poet, Burne-Jones holds a unique position in our school ; nor are his claims to admiration likely to suffer from the fact that the principles he professed have sometimes been adopted by imitators not sufficiently endowed for so high an endeavour.

In the story of a movement that limitations of space must needs leave inadequate it would be impossible to ignore or to omit the names of two men who worthily occupied a distinguished place in the art of their time. G. F. Watts and

COASTING BOHEMIA

Lord Leighton may both be said to stand apart from the particular current of artistic revolution associated with the names I have already cited. The former was already deeply imbued with the spirit of the great Venetians even before the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had come into being, but the poetic impulse, which he owned in common with his younger contemporaries, sets much of his work in clear alliance with theirs. His "Love and Death" illustrates in a form of unquestioned beauty the attempt to combine the sometimes divergent qualities of the two great schools of Italy; and the example set by both reappears in a union that is entirely satisfying when Watts turns to the task of portraiture. Nor could any better examples of his accomplishment have been procured than the figure of Lord Tennyson or the head of Mr. Walter Crane.

Lord Leighton's finely cultivated talent, though his early sojourn at Florence had coloured the work of his youth, reveals at the hour of its maturity an undivided allegiance to classic ideals. His mediaevalism was a garb quickly discarded. "By degrees," he once wrote to me, "my growing love for form made me intolerant of the restraints and exigencies of costume and led me more and more, and finally, to a class of subjects, or more accurately to a state of conditions, in which supreme scope is left to pure

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

artistic qualities, in which no form is imposed upon the artist by the tailor, but in which every form is made obedient to the conception of the design he has in hand. These conditions classic subjects afford, and as vehicles therefore of abstract form, which is a thing not of one time but of all time, these subjects can never be obsolete, and though to many they are a dead letter, they can never be an anachronism." With this confession of faith before us we may measure how far the unceasing labours of a long career availed to satisfy the noble purpose of his youth. A certain lack of virility, an imperfect sense of energy and movement which is needed to give the final sense of vitality to all art, however directed, may perhaps be alleged even against the most complete of his achievements; but the saving sense of grace, revealed in forms often finely proportioned and justly selected, remains as an abiding element in his constant pursuit of classic perfection, and is clearly enough illustrated in such works as the "Summer Moon" and the "Return of Persephone," which the committee have secured for the present exhibition.

We must return now for a while to the earlier experiments of our school in order to trace the growth of the art of landscape, a department wherein by the consent of Europe our painters hold a place of indisputable supremacy. Gains-

COASTING BOHEMIA

borough, as I have already hinted, had found in the surroundings of his Suffolk home the material he needed for the display of his deeply seated love of outward nature ; and his achievements in this kind rest as the first foundation of what is most enduringly characteristic in English landscape painting. But as early as the year 1749, when Gainsborough was only a youth of twenty-two, Richard Wilson was already resident in Italy, and had begun that exquisite series of studies from Italian scenery which won so small a meed of praise from his own generation. The special direction of his art was not, indeed, destined to inspire many of those who came after him, for the new spirit of naturalism sought and captured certain qualities of dramatic expressions in the rendering of nature that were not of his seeking ; nor was the ordered beauty of his compositions, or the serene charm which characterises his gift as a colourist, likely to be heeded by a race of painters who were already on the alert to seize and record those fleeting effects of changing light and tone which found such splendid embodiment in the vigorous painting of Constable. Constable's frank reliance upon light and shade as constituting the final element of beauty in landscape could never have been accepted without reserve by Richard Wilson, but the pursuit which Constable initiated has owned an overpowering attraction for

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

nearly all students of nature since his time ; and his example, transported to France through the art of Michel, may be allowed to have powerfully inspired that distinguished group of French artists whose work was a part of the outcome of the modern romantic movement. It would be impossible here to distinguish in detail the separate work of English painters who have worthily carried forward the tradition established by Constable ; nor is it needful now to vindicate the claims of men like Cotman, Cox, and Crome in an earlier time, or of Hook and Cecil Lawson, Sam Bough, Mason, and Frederick Walker, whose more recent work brings the story of this branch of art down to our own day. Of English landscapists, indeed, the name is legion, and at the head of them all, if we may judge by the extent of the fame he has won, stands the name of Joseph Mallord William Turner, whose genius, heralded to the world by the eloquent advocacy of Ruskin, is here fully illustrated in superb examples from the collections of Mr. Chapman, Lord Strathcona, Mr. Beecham, and Mr. Pierpont Morgan. Turner, in his youth, while he was still under the influence of Girtin, might well have owned kinship with Richard Wilson, as both in turn might have confessed their indebtedness to the great Frenchman, Claude Lorraine ; but Turner's talent, as it passed on-

COASTING BOHEMIA

ward in steady development, parted completely with the shackles imposed by earlier authority and left him at the close of a brilliant career in a position of complete isolation and independence. There will always be those—and I may count myself among the number—who will turn with increasing love to the more restrained beauty of his earlier work, and who will seek rather in his water-colours than in his paintings in oil for the finer expression of those more individual qualities which marked the practice of his prime. But personal preference need count for little in the acknowledgment which all alike must freely render, that his genius has conferred a lasting glory upon the English school.

With this brief survey of the work of deceased British artists the mission of the critic may here fitly end. The purpose of such an introduction as I have attempted is sufficiently served if, in sketching the growth of our school from its foundation in the middle of the eighteenth century, I have succeeded in indicating the several diverse currents which have contributed to its development, and have left so rich a heritage in achievement and example to the men of a younger day. Of the varied quality of that later work the exhibition must be left to speak for itself. That the product of our time lacks nothing of vitality is sufficiently shown in the

ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

spirit of restless and untiring experiment which marks the varied output of our younger school ; and that it still preserves among many of its exponents a loyal adherence to the imperishable traditions of the past is no less clearly asserted in the work of men who are now labouring with undiminished faith in the ideals established by an earlier generation. Of Subject and Portrait, in the art that leans for its support upon qualities of decorative design and in the direct and searching questionings of nature, noticeable in every direction and manifest specially in the treatment of landscape, there is a rich and abundant harvest in the present collection.

WITH GEORGE MEREDITH ON BOX HILL

“COME down,” he wrote to me one day, “and see our Indian summer here. A dozen differently coloured torches you will find held up in our woods, for which, however, as well as for your sensitive skin, we require stillness and a smiling or sober sky.”

This was written in the autumn of 1878, and is drawn from one of many little notes of invitation which used to preface a delightful day with George Meredith on the slopes of Box Hill. Our long rambles filled the afternoon, and were preceded by a simple but thoughtfully chosen lunch, which, when the weather allowed, was set out upon a gravel walk in front of the cottage beside the tall, sheltering hedge that gave shade from the sun. Meredith attached no small importance to the details of these little feasts. He prided himself not a little on his gastronomic knowledge, and was pleased when our climate made it possible to reproduce the impression

GEORGE MEREDITH

of a genuine French *déjeuner en plein air*. In another letter he writes: "The promise of weather is good. Lilac, laburnum, nightingales, and asparagus are your dishes. Hochheimer or dry, still, red Bouzy, Richebourg and your friend to wash all down." His knowledge of these matters of the table was, perhaps, not very profound, but the appropriate vocabulary which gave the air of the expert was always at his command. And this, I think, was characteristic of the man in respect of many fields of knowledge that lay beyond the arena in which his imaginative powers were directly engaged.

In his art he was never quite content to image only the permanent facts of life, either in their larger or simpler issues, unless he was permitted at the same time to entangle the characters of his creation in the coils of some problem that was intellectual rather than purely emotional. He loved to submit his creations to the instant pressure of their time, and with this purpose it was his business, no less than his pleasure, to equip himself intellectually with garnered stores of knowledge in fields into which the ordinary writers of fiction rarely enter. It was not, of course, to be supposed that he could claim equal mastery in all, although his intellect was so active and so agile that his limitations were not easily discerned. I remember one day

COASTING BOHEMIA

at an Exhibition in the New Gallery having introduced him to an old gentleman, whose long life had been spent in a study of the drawings of the old masters, to whom Meredith, with inimitable fluency, was expounding the peculiar virtues of the art of Canaletto. Meredith was eloquent, but the discourse somehow failed to impress the aged student. When they had parted his sole commentary to me was : " Your friend—Mr. Meredith, I think you said—endeavoured to persuade me that he understood Canaletto, but he did not."

But even if, in this single instance, the criticism be accepted as just, it must be conceded by all who knew him well that Meredith was not often caught tripping in the discussion of any topic in which his intellect had been actively engaged. Sometimes—and then, perhaps, rather in a spirit of audacious adventure and for exercise of his incomparable powers of expression—he would make a bold sortie into realms of knowledge that were only half conquered. But this was, for the most part, only when he had an audience waiting on his words. When he had only a single companion to listen there was no man whose talk was more penetrating or more sincere : and he was at his best, I used to think, in those long rambles that filled our afternoons at Box Hill. The active exercise in which he delighted seemed

GEORGE MEREDITH

to steady and concentrate those intellectual forces that sometimes ran riot when he felt himself called upon to dominate the mixed assembly of a dinner table.

No one, assuredly, ever possessed a more genuine or a more exalted delight in nature. His veneration for the earth and for all that sprang from the earth as an unfailing and irrefutable source of the highest sanity in thought and feeling, amounted almost to worship. He never deliberately set out to paint the landscape in set language as we passed along, but a brief word dropped here and there upon our way, telling of some aspect of beauty newly observed and newly registered, showed clearly that every fresh encounter with nature served to add another gem to the hoarded store of beauty that lay resident in his mind. And yet, even here, the research for the recondite, either in the fact observed or in the phrase that fixed it, peeped out characteristically in the most careless fashion of his talk. He loved to signalise an old and abiding love of the outward world by some new token that found expression at once in language newly coined ; and he would break away on a sudden from some long-drawn legend of a half-imaginary character that was often set in the frame of burlesque, to note, with a swift change to a graver tone, some passing aspect of the scene that challenged his admiration afresh.

COASTING BOHEMIA

And then, when he had quietly added this last specimen to his cabinet, he would as quickly turn again, with boisterous mirth, to complete the caricature portrait of some common friend, which he loved to embellish with every detail of imagined embroidery.

In a mixed company Meredith did not often lean to the discussion of literature. He inclined rather, if an expert on any subject was present, to press the conversation in that direction, exhibiting nearly always a surprising knowledge of the specialist's theme, knowledge at any rate sufficient to yield in the result a full revelation of the store of information at the disposal of his interlocutor. But in those long rambles when we were alone he loved to consider and discuss the claims of the professors of his own art, rejecting scornfully enough the current standards of his own time, but approaching with entire humility the work of masters whom he acknowledged. In those days (I am speaking now of the years between 1875 and 1888) he had by no means attained even to that measure of popularity which came to him at a later time, and when the talk veered towards his own work it was easy to perceive a lurking sense of disappointment that left him, however, with an undiminished faith in the art to which his life was pledged.

GEORGE MEREDITH

During the autumn of 1878 I had written to him in warm appreciation of some of his poems, and his reply is characteristic. "There is no man," he writes, "I would so strongly wish to please with my verse. I wish I had more time for it, but my Pactolus, a shrivelled stream at best, will not flow to piping, and as to publishing books of verse, I have paid heavily for that audacity twice in pounds sterling. I had for audience the bull, the donkey, and the barking cur. He that pays to come before them a third time, we will not give him his name." I think in regard to all his work, whether in prose or verse, he was haunted at that time by the presence of the bull, the donkey, and the barking cur. But if this had yielded for the moment some sense of bitterness in regard to the results of his own career, his attitude towards life was even then undaunted, and left him generously disposed towards all achievement of true pretensions, either in the present or in the past. Indeed, the true greatness of the man was in nothing better displayed than in the unbroken urbanity of his outlook upon life. His was of all natures I have known the most hopeful of the world's destiny. The starved and shrivelled pessimism of the disappointed egotist had no part in his disposition. His wider outlook upon life was undimmed by the pain of whatever measure of

COASTING BOHEMIA

personal failure had befallen him, and I believe that even if his faith in humanity had not of itself been sufficing and complete, he could have drawn from the earth, and the unfading beauty of the earth, encouragement enough to keep him steadfast in his way.

How admirably has he expressed this joy of full comradeship with nature in the opening lines of the "Woods of Westermain" !

Toss your heart up with the lark ;
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,
Fair you fare.

So he cries in invitation ; and then a little later, in celebration of the joys that await the wood-wayfarer, he adds :

This is being bird and more,
More than glad musician this ;
Granaries you will have a store
Past the world of woe and bliss ;
Sharing still its bliss and woe ;
Harnessed to its hungers, no.
On the throne Success usurps,
You shall seat the joy you feel
Where a race of water chirps
Twisting hues of flourished steel :
Or where light is caught in hoop
Up a clearing's leafy rise,
Where the crossing deer-herds troop
Classic splendours, knightly dyes.
Or, where old-eyed oxen chew
Speculation with the cud,

GEORGE MEREDITH

Read their pool of vision through,
Back to hours when mind was mud.

Or yet again towards the close :

Hear that song ; both wild and ruled.

Hear it : is it wail or mirth ?

Ordered, bubbled, quite unschooled ?

None, and all : it springs of Earth.

O but hear it ! 'tis the mind ;

Mind that with deep Earth unites,

Round the solid trunk to wind

Rings of clasping parasites.

Music have you there to feed

Simplest and most soaring need.

In his prose work Meredith seems often half distrustful of his own inspiration, halting now and then to test the validity of the emotions he has awakened, and at times letting a jet of irony on to the fire he has kindled, as though half suspicious that he had been lured into the ways of the sentimentalist. But in his poetry he owns a larger daring and a higher freedom ; there he treads unhampered by these half-conscious fears, and yet there, no less than in his prose, we can recognise his insatiable hunger to find and discover new tokens by which to arrest the vision that he loves.

Meredith's little cottage at the foot of Box Hill was the fittest home for the writer and for the man. Not so far removed from town as to be beyond the echo of its strife, it enabled him

COASTING BOHEMIA

when his duty as reader to Chapman and Hall took him to the office to pass an hour or two at luncheon at the Garrick Club, where he loved in these brief intervals of leisure to rally some of his old friends in laughing and cheerful converse.

These occasional visits served to keep him in touch with the moving problems of his time, towards none of which he affected any kind of indifference; and yet the pungent wit and profound penetration of view with which he handled such mundane themes were won and hoarded, I think, in the long silences and the chosen loneliness of his Surrey home. Hard by Flint Cottage stands the little inn at Burford Bridge, now transformed and enlarged to meet the constant incursions of visitors from the town, but at the time when I first remember it but little changed from the days when it sheltered Keats while he was setting the finishing touches to "Endymion." The association often led us in our rambles to speak of the work of the earlier poet, for whose faultless art Meredith owned an unbounded admiration. Of the poets I think he spoke more willingly than of the writers of prose, though he was on the alert to recognise genius in any form, and never lacked enthusiasm in appraising the work of a writer like Charlotte Brontë. For George Eliot's achievement he never professed more than a

GEORGE MEREDITH

strictly limited respect. Her more pretentious literary methods failed to impress him, and there were times when the keenness of his hostile criticism bordered upon scorn. I remember when some one in his presence ventured to remark that George Eliot, "panoplied in all the philosophies, was apt to swoop upon a commonplace," he hailed the criticism with the keenest enjoyment, and half-laughingly declared that he would like to have forged the phrase himself.

At the close of our afternoon rambles, that in summer time were prolonged to close upon the dinner hour, we would return at loitering pace down the winding paths to the cottage, and when I was able to stay the night our evenings would be spent in the little *châlet* that stood on the hill at the summit of his garden. Meredith truly loved the secluded bower that he had fashioned for himself. It was there he worked, and during the summer months it was there he constantly passed the night. It was there I used to leave him when our long talk was over, and descend the garden to the room that had been allotted to me in the cottage. But of talk he never tired, and it was often far into the night before we parted. He loved also, when he found an appreciative listener, to read aloud long passages from his poems. Once I remember he recited to me during a single evening the whole of the

COASTING BOHEMIA

body of sonnets forming the poem of "Modern Love." On occasion—but not, perhaps, quite so willingly—he might be tempted to anticipate publication by reading a chapter or two from an uncompleted story, and I can recall with what admirable effect, not at Box Hill, but at Ightham Moat where we were both the guests of a gracious hostess, whose death long preceded his own, he read aloud to us the remarkable opening chapters of the "Amazing Marriage."

Meredith greatly enjoyed those occasional visits to his friends, and found himself, I think, especially at home in the house I have named. He did not disdain the little acts of homage there freely offered him, for the guests assembled were always to be counted among his worshippers, and yet he was finely free from the smallest pretence of consciously asserted dignity. As a rule, he spoke but little of his own work, and then only on urgent invitation, content, for the most part, to accept the passing topic, which his high spirits and unflagging humour would quickly lift to illumination. On such occasions he loved to invent and elaborate, for one or other of his more intimate friends, some fancied legend that was absolutely detached from life and reality, and sometimes he so fell in love with the fable of his creation that for weeks or months afterwards his letters would continue to elaborate and to

GEORGE MEREDITH

develop a story that had only taken birth in the jesting mood of a moment.

The young people of a country-house always found a welcome from Meredith, and towards women at all times his respect was of a kind that needed no spur of social convention. It sprang of a deep faith in their high service to the world, and a quickened belief in the larger future that was in store for them. In his own home the spirit of raillery, that he could not always curb, sometimes pressed too hardly upon those nearest him ; but I think he was scarcely conscious of any pain he may have inflicted—hardly aware, indeed, of the reiterated insistence with which he would sometimes expose and ridicule some harmless foible of character that did not deserve rebuke. But if this fault must be conceded in regard to those who stood in the intimate circle of his home, it certainly implied no failing reverence towards the sex they owned. After all, an artist, who has a full claim to that title, is revealed most truly in his work. If the revelation there can be suspected, the art is false, and it may, I think, be claimed without challenge for Meredith that in the created characters of his work he has done for women what has been accomplished by no other writer since Shakespeare. Over all the mystery that gives them charm, his mastery in delineation was complete,

COASTING BOHEMIA

but it is his appreciation of the nobler possibilities of character that lie behind the wayward changes of temperament that sets his portraiture of women beyond the reach of rivalry. I think most women who came to know him were conscious of this in his presence, and it is small wonder that that larger circle who met themselves mirrored in his books should count him among the most fearless champions of their sex.

A few months ago I found myself treading once more the road that leads to his cottage under the hill. Once again a "dozen differently coloured torches" were held up in the woods behind the house, flaming as I saw them first in his company. But there was one torch that burned no more. It had fallen from the hand that held it, and lay extinguished upon the earth his spirit owned and loved. But those days I passed with him there are memorable still, and as I stood beside the cottage gate amid the gathering shadows of evening, his own beautiful lines came back to me from "Love in the Valley":

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping

Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.

Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,

Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown eve-jar.

Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:

So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.

Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,

Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL

SOME few years ago, when I was writing my play of *Tristram and Iseult*, a lady of my acquaintance, who was familiar with the music-drama by Wagner on the same theme, asked me by what means I had contrived to secure Madame Wagner's consent to the use of the story for the English stage. Such ignorance of one of the most beautiful of the legends included in the Arthurian cycle, enshrined for English readers by Sir Thomas Malory's immortal prose romance of *Le Morte d'Arthur*, is of course phenomenal and extreme, but it was matched by my experience a few days after the production of the play, when an enterprising newscutting agency, misled by some reference in the programme to the great chronicler, forwarded to the theatre a bundle of criticisms addressed to Sir Thomas Malory, Knight, oblivious of the fact that he had passed beyond the reach of censure in the closing years of the fifteenth century.

It is possible, however, that even among

COASTING BOHEMIA

some of those to whom the source of the Tristram story is familiar, there may be here and there isolated worshippers of the great German composer who are hardly aware that the legend of Parsifal found its source in the same great body of Arthurian romance. Indeed, I have met with not a few to whom the identification of Parsifal with the British hero, Sir Perceval, comes somewhat as a surprise, and who are scarcely conscious that the whole legend of the "Holy Grail," which forms the subject of Wagner's opera, had its source in Britain, and was afterwards incorporated in romances that first saw the light in France. The writer who originally gave to the story its poetic form, and in whose work the purely human features of the narrative are already linked with the history of Christianity, was Crestien de Troyes, who began to write about 1150, and died before the end of the twelfth century. His poems embrace a number of the Arthurian stories, but it so happens that amongst them the "Conte del Graal" was left unfinished, and was afterwards completed by several writers, chief among whom, Wauchier, confessed that he had drawn his inspiration from the work of a Welshman, Bleheris, in whose version the "Grail" hero is not Sir Perceval but Sir Gawain.

But even before Crestien's death the beauty of

THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL

certain of these Arthurian legends had captured the imagination of Europe, and in the opening years of the thirteenth century we have the "Parzival" of Wolfram von Eschenbach, of Bavaria, who admits his knowledge of Crestien, but confesses a preference for a still older French version by Guyot, the Provençal. To Wolfram's poem Wagner is directly indebted for that portion of the story which forms the basis of the opera. The Bavarian knight died about the year 1220, and his work forms a complete and beautiful poem, concluding with a recital of the fortunes of Lohengrin, the son of Parsifal, who, in his turn, became ruler of the Grail Kingdom. Here, as with Crestien, the link with Christianity is firmly established, and in a still later form of the story embodied by Malory the Christianising influence is further developed, and the Grail, now definitely identified with the Holy Cup, is assumed to have been brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea, who himself had filled it with the blood that flowed from the side of the Redeemer.

In all these later forms of the legend, however, certain features and incidents survive which clearly prove that the story owned an earlier, and a Pagan source. Even in Wolfram the Grail is not a cup, but a stone endowed with plenty-giving qualities, and the symbols, which in all later versions are bodily taken over for the

COASTING BOHEMIA

service of the Church, we find on examination to possess a pre-Christian character and origin.

A subject upon which such a mass of criticism and scholarship has accumulated cannot here be discussed in full, but the learned work of the late Alfred Nutt, and the acute researches into the heart of the mystery made by Miss Jessie Weston, one of the most patient and diligent students of a difficult problem, establish almost beyond dispute that the Grail, in its earlier manifestations, bore no relation to the history of the Christian faith. The magic symbols that stood ready to the hand of those who gave to the legend its final religious shape had indisputably an earlier and a different significance. The dripping lance, that now becomes the weapon that pierced the Body of the Redeemer; the Cup containing the blood that flowed from His Side, had figured first as life-giving symbols before they had taken on the holier character with which they are endowed by the chroniclers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

This was well established by Mr. Alfred Nutt, who referred their origin to the earlier forms of Celtic folklore; and in Miss Jessie Weston's latest contribution to the literature of the subject, published in June of the present year, a powerful plea is put forward for the interpretation of the story in the light of the

THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL

earlier forms of nature-worship, linked by far-reaching tradition with the ritual of the Adonis cult, and associated with the quest for the principle of Life itself. It is unquestionably true that this theory explains as no other can many of the features of the Grail story which have no relation to Christianity. The Fisher King, the Guardian of the precious Grail, is a title which cannot be understood unless we take account of primitive tradition, in which the fish is widely employed as a symbol of life, and the fate and character of the maimed king who guards the Grail, as well as the mystic instruments which accompany its revelation, are equally referable to Pagan ritual belonging to earlier forms of nature-worship.

This is not the place to follow in detail the many intricate and puzzling problems which beset the history of the Grail. It is, indeed, a fascinating theme, and has already attracted the learning and research of many scholars in England, Germany, and France, and is perhaps destined, in the absence of some of the earlier texts from which the legend was drawn, never to receive a final and wholly satisfying solution. Here, however, we are concerned only with those features of the story at a date when it had already received the stamp of Christian sentiment, and more especially with that particular form of

COASTING BOHEMIA

it embodied by the composer, Richard Wagner, in his world-famous opera.

Apart from the hero himself, the characters engaged in the drama are not numerous. There is the aged Titurel ; the wounded Amfortas whose sufferings, imposed as the penalty of unlawful love, must endure till the coming of the deliverer, Parsifal ; Klingsor, the malign ruler of the enchanted castle, served by the spell-bound Kundry, an enchantress, only to be released from her thralldom by the knight who successfully resists her witch-like fascinations ; and Gurnemanz, through whose aid and guidance the hero is finally enabled to accomplish his task. All appear in Wolfram's romance, under the names retained by Wagner ; and the types recur also in other versions of the legend, sometimes under different names, and with endless variations in the adventures befalling them. Parsifal is our own Sir Perceval, a knight of Arthur's Court, the Peredur of the Mabinogion, not, however, the earliest or the latest hero of the Grail quest. Before him in historic position is Sir Gawain, who, as already noted, plays the rôle of deliverer in the poem of Bleheris ; while in the later romances his place is taken by the chaste Sir Galahad, the son of Sir Lancelot, who—by reason of his sin with Guinevere—was denied the reward of achieving the quest in his

THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL

own person. In like manner the Grail King, Amfortas, takes on other titles, according to the particular source of the legend, while the part played by Kundry as the Grail messenger is only a variant of the rôle assigned to the "Loathly Damsel," with the added qualities of the sorceress, who serves the sinister purpose of Klingsor in the enchanted castle.

But a comparison of all these legends leaves undisturbed the fact that in its original shape the story and its environment are British, and, further, that it first took literary form in the work of a Welsh poet. Issuing thence, as we now know, this and other of the Arthurian romances spread like a flame over the Western world, finding their principal exponents in Germany and France, but extending even to Sicily, where there is still a tradition that in the mirage that floats between the island and the mainland can be seen the sleeping form of King Arthur embedded in the heart of Etna, and awaiting the sound of the horn that shall summon him back to his kingdom. It is not a little strange that these legends, doomed to the long sleep of King Arthur himself, should have awakened to new vitality in the work of our own modern poets, and should equally have attracted the genius of the great German composer.

To those who are interested in the dramatic

COASTING BOHEMIA

side of Wagner's genius, the study of Wolfram's beautiful poem, to which he is directly indebted, will not be without fruitful results. As a general comment, it may be said that the dramatist misses something of the spirit of romance, something also of the atmosphere of chivalry to be found in the master whom he has followed. On the other hand, it will be clearly seen that he had handled this material with the vision of a dramatist, supported by an imagination which seizes, instinctively and surely, upon personages and incidents that enforce the ethical message he seeks to deliver. Perhaps the most beautiful part of Wolfram's poem, of necessity excluded from the closer action of drama, concerns Parsifal's earlier years, before he had won the right to carry arms as one of the knights of King Arthur's Court. Gahmuret, his father, in search of adventure, had first taken service under Baruc, and had won the love of the heathen queen, Belakane, who bore him a son, Feirefiz, the father of Prester John. But before the birth of the child, Gahmuret, returning to Europe, had sought and won the love of Queen Herzeleide, the mother of the Grail hero. Gahmuret was manifestly very conscious of his restless temperament, and duly warned his newly-won bride that what had happened before might recur.

THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL

Then he looked on Queen Herzeleide, and he spake to her
courteously :

“If in joy we would live, O Lady, then my warder thou shalt
not be,

When loosed from the bonds of sorrow, for knighthood my
heart is fain ;

If thou holdest me back from Tourney I may practise such
wiles again

As of old, when I fled from the lady whom I won with mine
own right hand,

When from strife she would fain have kept me, I fled from her
folk and land.”

Then she spake : “Set what bonds thou wilt, by thy word
I will still abide.”

“Many spears would I break asunder and each month would to
Tourney ride,

Thou shalt murmur not, O Lady, when such knightly joust
I'd run !”

This she sware, so the tale was told me, and the maid and her
lands he won.

And yet, despite her brave front, Herzeleide
was destined to endure much sorrow at the
hands of her restless lord. Before Parsifal was
born, he had already set out on fresh adventure,
leaving his lonely lady sick with longing for his
return.

As for half a year he was absent, she looked for his coming
sure,

For but in the thought of that meeting might the life of the
Queen endure.

Then brake the sword of her gladness thro' the midst of the
hilt in twain,

Ah, me, and alas ! for her mourning, that goodness should
bear such pain

COASTING BOHEMIA

And faith ever waken sorrow ! Yea, so doth it run alway
With the life of men, and to-morrow must they mourn who
rejoice to-day !

Here follow the bitter tidings of Gahmuret's death. Then, when the child of sorrow came to be born, Herzeleide retreated from the Court, and took refuge in a wild woodland, where Parsifal grew to manhood, in ignorance of the world and its ways ; in ignorance also of his high lineage, for the Queen held that she had suffered enough through knighthood and its adventures, and sought only to rescue her child from the dangers of his father's fate. I am drawing again upon Miss Jessie Weston's charming translation of Wolfram's poem for this delightful picture of Parsifal's boyhood :

No knightly weapon she gave him save such as in childish
play

He wrought himself from the bushes that grew on his lonely
way.

A bow and arrows he made him, and with these in thoughtless
glee,

He shot at the birds as they carolled o'erhead in the leafy tree.
But when the feathered songster of the woods at his feet lay
dead,

In wonder and dumb amazement he bowed down his golden
head,

And in childish wrath and sorrow tore the locks of his sunny
hair

(For I wot well of all earth's children was never a child so fair
As this boy, who, afar in the desert, from the haunts of man-
kind did dwell,

THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL

Who bathed in the mountain streamlet, and roamed o'er the
rock-strewn fell !)
Then he thought him well how the music which his hand had
for ever stilled,
Had thrilled his soul with its sweetness ; and his heart was
with sorrow filled,
And the ready tears of childhood flowed forth from their
fountains free,
And he ran to his mother weeping, and bowed him beside her
knee.

It may be that this passage partly inspired
Wagner in his treatment of the incident of the
stricken swan ; but in the heart of Herzeleide,
Parsifal's love of the birds only begot a fierce
jealousy, and she sent forth her servants to snare
and slay the woodland choristers, so that she
might have no rival in her boy's love. But the
boy's reproaches touched the mother's heart :

. . . "Now sweet, my mother, why trouble the birds so sore,
Forsooth they can ne'er have harmed thee, ah ! leave them in
peace once more !"
And his mother kissed him gently, "Perchance I have wrought
a wrong,
Of a truth the dear God who made them, He gave unto them
their song,
And I would not that one of His creatures should sorrow
because of me."

The turning-point in Parsifal's career came a
little later on, when on his wondering eyes fell
the vision of certain of King Arthur's knights
who passed through the forest :

COASTING BOHEMIA

It chanced through a woodland thicket one morn as he took
his way,
And brake from o'erhanging bushes full many a leafy spray,
That a pathway steep and winding rose sharply his track anear,
And the distant beat of horse-hoofs fell strange on his
wondering ear.
Then the boy grasped his javelin firmly, and thought what the
sound might be ;
“Perchance 'tis the Devil cometh ; well, I care not if it be he !
Methinks I can still withstand him, be he never so fierce and
grim,
Of a truth my lady mother she is o'er much afraid of him !”

As he stood there for combat ready, behold ! in the morning
light
Three knights rode into the clearing in glittering armour
bright.
From head to foot were they armèd, each one on his gallant
steed,
And the lad, as he saw their glory, thought each one a god
indeed !
No longer he stood defiant, but knelt low upon his knee,
And cried, “God who helpeth all men, I pray Thee have
thought for me !”

From that hour the boy's heart, like that of
his father, was fired by the spirit of adventure.
How he followed after them in their wanderings,
and how, after much happening, he arrived at
King Arthur's Court, were too long to tell.
When she saw that his mind was made up his
mother put no obstacle in his path, but robed
him in the garb of a fool, thinking, in the
cunning of her mother heart, and “the cruelty

THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL

of a mother's love," as the poet phrases it, that when the world mocked him he would return to the forest again.

It is at this point in the mental development of our hero that he makes his entrance into Wagner's opera. As already noted, full and skilful use is made by the modern author of the dramatic material which the legend discloses. In the associated characters of Kundry and Klingsor he has given logical and coherent form to much that lies scattered and disjointed in Wolfram's poem; and he has built up the character of Parsifal, adding to the simpler conception of the older writer an element of conscious philosophy that makes a strong appeal to the countrymen of Goethe. Not, be it said, that the outline left by Wolfram was indefinite or uncertain. Already in the legend Parsifal's personality is clearly marked. "A brave man," says Wolfram, "yet slowly wise is he whom I hail my hero," and the steady growth of wisdom based on sympathy and suffering is clearly traced in Parsifal's successive visits to the Grail Castle. It is the ignorance of innocence and egotism that on the first occasion keeps his lips dumb; when the sympathy he was afterwards to acquire might have prompted the simple question that would have set the sufferer free, while it was the richer experience that came as his after inheritance

COASTING BOHEMIA

which enabled him finally to achieve the liberation of the wounded Amfortas. Of that first visit of Parsifal to the Castle, Wolfram writes :

Yet one, uncalled, rode thither, and evil did then befall,
For foolish he was, and witless, and sin-laden from thence did
fare,

Since he asked not his host of his sorrow and the woe that he
saw him bear.

No man would I blame, yet this man I ween for his sins must
pay

Since he asked not the longed-for question which all sorrow had
put away.

And in these lines we may find the germ of Wagner's more conscious and more didactic conception, wherein we miss something of the simplicity, something also of the rich humanity of the twelfth-century poet. This sense of loss in the modern presentment of the theme, loss in the spirit of romance, and in the impression of free and unfettered humanity, is perhaps an individual impression ; and I may conclude with a tribute to Wagner's genius by the late Alfred Nutt, which certainly does ample justice to the composer's contribution to the story, as he accepted it from the hands of the Bavarian knight.

"Kundry," he writes, "is Wagner's great contribution to the legend. She is the Herodias whom Christ, for her laughter, doomed to wander till He come again. Subject to the

THE LEGEND OF PARSIFAL

powers of evil, she must tempt and lure to their destruction the Grail warriors. And yet she would find release and salvation could a man resist her witch-like spell. She knows this. The scene between the unwilling temptress, whose success would but doom her afresh, and the virgin Parsifal thus becomes tragic in the extreme. How does this affect Amfortas and the Grail? In this way. Parsifal is a 'pure fool,' knowing naught of sin or suffering. It has been foretold of him he should become 'wise by fellow-suffering,' and so it proves. The overmastering rush of desire unseals his eyes, clears his mind. Heart-wounded by the shaft of passion, he feels Amfortas's torture thrill through him. The pain of the physical wound is his, but far more the agony of the sinner who has been unworthy of his high trust, and who, soiled by carnal sin, must yet daily come in contact with the Grail, symbol of the highest purity and holiness. The strength which comes of the new-born knowledge enables him to resist sensual longing, and thereby to release both Kundry and Amfortas."

SEX IN TRAGEDY

IN the popular view of the play of *Macbeth* the relation of the two principal characters may be said to lie beyond the region of doubt or discussion. According to the tradition of the stage, supported in this instance by a respectable array of critical authority, the motive-power of the drama is not supplied by the "vaulting ambition" of Macbeth himself, but is to be sought rather in the sinister strength and inhuman cruelty of his guilty partner. In virtue of her unshaken resolution and her superior resource, Lady Macbeth is regarded as the dominating influence in this awful record of crime, and it may indeed be doubted whether any part of equal length—for, counted by actual lines, it is one of the shortest in all tragic drama—has ever left so strong a stamp on the popular imagination. Nor is the prevalent conception of Lady Macbeth's character lacking at all in distinctness of definition. The outlines of the portrait are sharply and deeply impressed: and as she is commonly

SEX IN TRAGEDY

represented to us, it takes the form of a sexless creature endowed with the temper of a man and the heart of a fiend. The embodiment of all those fiercer passions that are deemed to be most repugnant to the ideal of womanhood, and moved by a will that is deaf to the pleadings of humanity and inaccessible to the voice of eternal law, she is regarded as the evil genius of her husband, crushing by the weight of her stronger individuality the constant promptings of his better nature, and sweeping him with irresistible force into a bottomless abyss of crime.

To this popular view of the character Mrs. Kemble, in her notes on Shakespeare, gives vivacious expression. Here we are told that Lady Macbeth was not only devoid of "all the peculiar sensibilities of her sex," but that she was actually incapable of the feelings of remorse. The sleepless madness of her closing hours was not, so we are assured, the result of conscious guilt, for that was foreign to her nature: it resembled rather the nightmare of a butcher who is haunted by the blood in which his hands are imbrued. And as to her death, it was due in no degree to the anguish of a stricken soul, but was in some occult way directly traceable to the unconquerable wickedness of her heart.

"I think," writes Mrs. Kemble, with the eager interest of a scientific inquirer on the track

COASTING BOHEMIA

of a new poison, "her life was destroyed by sin as by a disease of which she was unconscious, and that she died of a broken heart, while the impenetrable resolution of her will remained unbowed. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak ; the body can sin but so much and survive ; and other deadly passions besides those of violence and sensuality can wear away its fine tissues and undermine its wonderful fabric. The woman's mortal frame succumbed to the tremendous weight of sin and suffering which her immortal soul had power to sustain ; and having destroyed its temporal house of earthly sojourn, that soul, unexhausted by its wickedness, went forth into its new abode of eternity."

Allowing for a certain feminine vehemence in the wording of the indictment, this view of Lady Macbeth can scarcely be said to exaggerate the current conception of her character. That it represents a somewhat grotesque caricature of Shakespeare's marvellous creation, will plainly appear from even the most cursory examination of the text, and has, indeed, already been pointed out on more than one occasion. In 1867 Mr. P. W. Clayden, in the *Fortnightly Review*, made a praiseworthy attempt to revive the finer outlines of Shakespeare's portrait, an attempt in which he had already been forestalled by Mr. Fletcher in the *Westminster Review* for

SEX IN TRAGEDY

1844, and by a writer in the *National Review* for 1863.

The only reproach that can fairly be brought against the last-named article, which for the rest deserves to rank as a careful and searching piece of criticism, is that it has too much the tone of being delivered as a brief in the lady's favour. The advocacy of her cause, and the consequent denunciation of the character of her husband, are both in a style that seems rather to blur the imaginative beauty of the picture as a whole. We are made to feel that we are sitting in a court of law rather than at a poet's feet, and we are sharply reminded of the somewhat inappropriate arena into which the discussion has drifted by the writer's concluding assertion, that Macbeth was "one of the worst villains" ever drawn by Shakespeare. Charges of this sort smack too strongly of the forensic method, and have but little significance when applied to the central figure of a great tragedy. If Macbeth stood at the bar of the Old Bailey he would undoubtedly be convicted of murder, and so, for that matter, would his wife ; but it is the poet's privilege to lift the record of crime into an ideal atmosphere ; and when, at the magic bidding of genius, the closest secrets of the human heart have been unlocked, and its inner workings laid bare, such epithets as may be used to dismiss the

COASTING BOHEMIA

record of a police case cease to be instructive, and are scarcely even relevant to the wider issue that has been raised. The character of Iago, with whom Macbeth is compared, stands on different ground. It was there no part of Shakespeare's task to lift the impenetrable mask of malice which serves as the instrument of Othello's destruction. Iago is known to us only by his pitiless delight in human torture, and by the sinister cruelty of which he stands accused and convicted ; while in the case of Macbeth, despite his heavier record of actual crime, the evil that he wrought serves only as the stepping-stone by which we are allowed to enter into the deeper recesses of his soul.

But there is one point in the article to which we have referred that has a profound interest for the student of the drama. It is the writer's main contention that the source of the error he seeks to correct is to be traced to what he terms a distortion of the stage. The figure of Lady Macbeth as now popularly accepted is represented as the lineal descendant of the genius of Mrs. Siddons. It was her incomparable art which first gave to the character the particular stamp it now bears, and chased from the popular imagination the more delicate creation of the poet's brain. This charge carries with it, of course, a splendid tribute to the artist's powers,

SEX IN TRAGEDY

and the experience of our own time proves that it may not be altogether unfounded. It is not so long ago since the glamour of Salvini's genius, with its superb gifts of voice and bearing and its incomparable technical resource, succeeded in effacing the Othello of Shakespeare, leaving us in its stead a figure admirably effective for the purposes of the stage, but sadly lacking in the higher and finer elements with which the character had been endowed by the author. And it may be added that the witness of contemporaries goes far to support this particular view of Mrs. Siddons' performance of the part. The poet Campbell testifies to the extraordinary impression she created when he writes that "the moment she seized the part she identified her image with it in the minds of the living generation." Boaden, her earlier biographer, speaking of her first entrance on the scene, says, "The distinction of sex was only external ; 'her spirits' informed their tenement with the apathy of a demon" ; and evidence to the same effect is supplied by the interesting notes of Professor Bell, first published some few years ago by Professor Fleeming Jenkin.

"Of Lady Macbeth," he writes, "there is not much in the play, but the wonderful genius of Mrs. Siddons makes it the whole. She makes it tell the whole story of the ambitious project,

COASTING BOHEMIA

the disappointment, the remorse, the sickness and despair of guilty ambition, the attainment of whose object is no cure for the wounds of the spirit. Macbeth in Kemble's hand is only a co-operating part. I can conceive Garrick to have sunk Lady Macbeth as much as Mrs. Siddons does Macbeth, yet when you see Mrs. Siddons play the part you scarcely can believe that any acting could make her part subordinate. Her turbulent and inhuman strength of spirit does all. She turns Macbeth to her purpose, makes him her mere instrument, guides, directs, and inspires the whole plot. Like Macbeth's evil genius, she hurries him on in the mad career of ambition and cruelty from which his nature would have shrunk."

If this was really the impression produced by Mrs. Siddons—and the Professor's notes are in close accord with Boaden's description of her as "an exulting savage"—it only proves how potent a factor in the art of the stage is the unconscious and inevitable intrusion of the actor's personality. For this creature of "turbulent and inhuman strength of spirit" was not at all what Mrs. Siddons in her critical moments conceived Lady Macbeth to be. Her recorded memoranda exhibit a widely different interpretation, and contain, indeed, much penetrating criticism on the general scope and purpose of

SEX IN TRAGEDY

the play. Even the physical image of Lady Macbeth, as it presented itself to her imagination, was strangely unlike the threatening and commanding figure which she actually presented on the stage. She thought of her as embodying a type of beauty "generally allowed to be most captivating to the other sex, fair, feminine, nay, perhaps even fragile"—a description which calls from her biographer the almost indignant protest that "the public would ill have exchanged such a representation for the dark locks and eagle eyes of Mrs. Siddons." But the most remarkable feature of her criticism lies in its constant insistence upon the essentially feminine nature of Lady Macbeth. Speaking of her entrance in the Third Act, she pictures in a few eloquent words the sudden change which the haunting memory of crime has already wrought in her character. "The golden round of royalty now crowns her brow and royal robes enfold her form, but the peace which passeth all understanding is lost to her for ever, and the worm that never dies already gnaws her heart." And, again, still treating of this same scene, the most deplorably pathetic in all tragedy, "she exhibits for the first time striking indications of sensibility, nay, tenderness and sympathy; and I think this conduct is nobly followed up by her during the whole of their subsequent event-

COASTING BOHEMIA

ful intercourse." Not less striking is the keen perception which these notes exhibit of the terrible anguish of the woman herself: "Her feminine nature, her delicate structure, it is too evident, are soon overwhelmed by the enormous pressure of her crimes. . . . She knows by her own woeful experience the torments he undergoes, and endeavours to alleviate his sufferings."

But there is one sentence in these notes more pregnant with meaning than all the rest. "The different physical powers of the two sexes," she writes, "are finely delineated in the different effects which their mutual crimes produce." Here in a few words is to be found the key that will unlock the heart of the tragedy. Not merely the different physical powers, but also, and with even a deeper truth, the different mental and moral characteristics of the two sexes in the presence of crime, are here illustrated by Shakespeare with unsurpassable force and delicacy. This is the imaginative theme which his transcendent genius has fastened upon the legend of Macbeth, and there is scarcely a line of the play which can be rightly understood until we realise that the two central figures are, and are deliberately intended to be, the embodiment and expression of the contrasted characteristics of sex. To argue that Lady Macbeth is not truly and typically a woman,

SEX IN TRAGEDY

is to destroy at one blow the delicate fabric which the poet has been at such pains to construct: to strive to vindicate the character of her husband at her expense, is but a vain endeavour to break through the empire of crime which sways and dominates the lives of both. There is here, indeed, no question of moral rescue for either; and it were idle to debate what he or she might have been under different conditions. For, as Shakespeare has conceived the action of the story, the shadow of guilt hangs from the first like a murky cloud in the sky, and the invisible hands of fate have drawn the net of evil closely around them long ere they appear upon the scene. But, accepting these conditions, with the transformation of individual character which they imply, *Macbeth* stands out among the works of Shakespeare as a sublime study of sexual contrast, a superb embodiment of the force and the weakness of the conjugal relation.

Coleridge has aptly observed that the dominant note of the tragedy is struck in its opening lines. The appearance of the supernatural agents of evil serves to set the framework of the picture: their choppy fingers have already drawn the magic circle of malignant fate around the caged souls of Macbeth and his partner, who are henceforth to be prisoners in a world where

COASTING BOHEMIA

“fog and filthy air” exclude the purer light of heaven, a world in which the moral order of the universe is upturned, and where “fair is foul and foul is fair.” The whole after-action of the story passes in this darkened and shadowed light: the forms of the principal characters starting out from a background of crime, illumined as by the lurid gleam of a stormy sunset whose clouds drip blood. And as the play advances the scene seems gradually shifted into some unknown latitude of eternal night, where the voices of nature are made to chorus the direful music of the witches’ incantation. Throughout the drama this dominant note of evil is kept constantly vibrating. Even for those whose hearts are free the poisoned air seems to carry some taint of infection, and the imagination shudders at the uneasy forebodings that haunt the soul of Banquo, who fears to trust his assured integrity to the attacks of the secret agents of the dark.

Hold, take my sword.—There’s husbandry in heaven,
Their candles are all out.—Take thee that too.
A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers!
Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose!

Macbeth, indeed, in its imaginative setting is a play of the night; and with unwearied

SEX IN TRAGEDY

imagery Shakespeare again and again appeals to the forces of darkness as so many symbols of the black pall of crime that weighs upon the souls of Macbeth and his wife. Nearly every page of the drama yields some striking picture fit to conjure up such fears as Banquo feels. Thus Macbeth himself on his way to the king's chamber :

Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep.

And, again, Lady Macbeth in the same scene :

It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman
Which gives the stern'st good-night.

And when the murder has been committed, Nature, through the lips of Lenox, makes her own contribution to the picture :

The night has been unruly : where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down ; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air : strange screams of death
And, prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion and confused events,
New hatched to the woful time, the obscure bird
Clamour'd the live-long night : some say the earth
Was feverous and did shake.

How superbly is the effect of this description and its symbolic significance again enforced by the words of Rosse in a subsequent scene :

COASTING BOHEMIA

By the clock 'tis day
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp :
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,
When living light should kiss it ?

The "night's predominance" fit emblem of the deeds of this "woful time" prevails to the end : and as Macbeth advances in his terrible crusade his soul becomes attuned to its surroundings, and on the eve of Banquo's murder he calls darkness to his aid. "The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day" when he utters that terrible invocation :

Come, seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day ;
And, with thy bloody and invisible hand,
Cancel, and tear to pieces, that great bond
Which keeps me pale ! Light thickens ; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood ;
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse ;
While night's black agents to their prey do rouse.

Lady Macbeth had already anticipated the spirit of this dread summons when, on the eve of Duncan's coming to her castle, she cries out in the impatience of her passionate impulse :

Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell !
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes ;
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry "Hold, Hold !"

SEX IN TRAGEDY

Through this realm of darkness, that knows no dawn till that last hour when by the hand of Macduff "the time is free," Shakespeare conducts his characters with no uncertain step. Lit as by the light of the under-world, the fell purpose of the guilty pair stands plainly revealed to us on the very threshold of the drama : the seeds of murder had been sown long ere the weird sisters have shrieked their fatal preface to the action ; and before we meet with either Macbeth or his wife, the souls of both are already deeply dyed in blood. Nothing, indeed, could be more absurd than to suggest that the murder of Duncan is the fruit of sudden impulse on his part or hers ; nor could anything be more destructive of the whole scheme of the poet's work than the assumption that Macbeth's enfeebled virtue was overborne by the satanic strength of her will. We cannot too often remind ourselves that there is no question of virtue here : it could not live in the air they had learned to breathe : it has passed beyond the ken of minds that have long brooded over crime. And it may be pointed out that Shakespeare himself has been at particular pains to make this clear to us ; for he doubtless felt, and felt rightly, that unless the starting-point were clearly kept in view, the subsequent development of the action, with the contrast of character it is designed to illustrate,

COASTING BOHEMIA

would lose all significance. Therefore at the first entrance of Macbeth, when the eulogy of others has but just pictured him to us as a soldier of dauntless courage fighting loyally for his sovereign, we are allowed to see that the thought of Duncan's death has already found a lodging in his heart. As the weird sisters lift the veil of the future and point the dark way to the throne, the vision that presents itself to his eyes is but the mirrored image of the bloody picture seated in his own brain ; and in foretelling the end, they wring from his lips a confession of the means which he has already devised for its fulfilment :

Why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature ? Present fears,
Are less than horrible imaginings :
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man, that function
Is smothered in surmise ; and nothing is
But what is not.

Then, like one affrighted by the echo of his own voice, he stands for a moment appalled at the concrete shape into which these withered hags have thrown his own phantasy, and, seeking to ignore, what he knows but too well, that in this dread business fate and he are one, tries to cheat his senses with the soothing anodyne that he may yet escape the responsibilities of action :

SEX IN TRAGEDY

If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir.

But this mood lasts only a little while, for in the next scene, even while his grateful sovereign is loading him with honours, his dark purpose is seen to have taken still more defined shape :

Stars, hide your fires !
Let not light see my black and deep desires :
The eye wink at the hand ! yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

All this, be it observed, takes place before the meeting between himself and his wife. But it needed not his coming to enable her to divine his thoughts or to force her to confess her own. His written message to her contains no hint of murder, and yet the words she utters, as she holds his letter in her hands, have no meaning unless we suppose that the violent death of Duncan had long been the subject of conjugal debate. She has watched the working of the poison in his breast, and has already anticipated the hesitation which he afterwards displays. How far her generous interpretation of his halting action accords with the real character of the man we shall presently see for ourselves : but for the moment her speech suffices to afford the clearest evidence that he had already imparted to her his guilty purpose :

COASTING BOHEMIA

Yet do I fear thy nature ;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness,
To catch the nearest way. Thou would'st be great ;
Art not without ambition ; but without
The illness should attend it. What thou would'st highly,
That thou would'st holily ; would'st not play false,
And yet would'st wrongly win.

And that we may be in no doubt as to the original source from which this diabolical plot proceeded, Shakespeare makes the truth doubly plain to us in a subsequent passage. When the hesitation, which she had feared, threatens to wreck their cherished scheme of crime, she reminds him that in its inception the idea was his, not hers :

What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me ?
.

Nor time, nor place,
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both :
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you.

Nor, indeed, would the conduct of either be humanly explicable unless we clearly grasp the situation as it is here plainly stated by Shakespeare. Her superlative strength in executive resource is only consistent with the assumption that she has accepted without questioning a policy that was none of her own devising : his apparent weakness, on the other hand, is the

SEX IN TRAGEDY

inevitable attitude of an imaginative temperament which feels all the responsibilities and forecasts the consequences of the crime it has conceived.

And this brings us to a consideration of the particular types of character which have been chosen by Shakespeare for the two principal figures of his tragedy. I have suggested that the ideal motive of the drama lies in its contrast of the distinctive qualities of sex as these are developed under the pressure of a combined purpose and a common experience : and it will be found, at any rate, that the special individuality which the author has assigned to Macbeth not less than to his wife aptly serves the end I have supposed he had in view. Dr. Johnson has said of the play, that "it has no nice discriminations of character ; the events are too great to admit the influence of particular dispositions, and the course of the action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents." This, of course, is putting the matter too crudely. Shakespeare was not wont to deal in abstractions, though by the force of his imagination he could so inform his work as to raise the exhibition of individual nature into an image of our common humanity. Still less can he be accused of inventing mere puppets with no other function than to carry the chosen legend to its close.

COASTING BOHEMIA

His characters always outlive the particular circumstances in which they are employed : they are enriched by a thousand touches of reality not absolutely needed for the requirements of the scene, which allow us to pursue them in imagination beyond the margin of the printed page. But there is at least this truth underlying Johnson's criticism, that, accepting the malign influences under which their natures are exhibited, there is nothing abnormal in the character of either ; and that what is particularly distinctive about them has been added with the view of giving ideal emphasis to tendencies that are common to us all.

We shall realise this the better as we come to examine more nearly their conduct and bearing towards the one terrible circumstance that dominates the lives of both. For it must never be forgotten that in the play of *Macbeth* the murder of Duncan means all. It is the touchstone by which temperament and disposition are tried and developed ; the instrument of evolution which the poet has found ready to his hand, and which he has wielded with all the extraordinary force of his genius. The first of a long list of horrors committed by Macbeth, it nevertheless in essence contains them all ; and though it hurries his unfortunate partner by a more terrible passage to a swifter doom, it

SEX IN TRAGEDY

illuminates as by lightning-flashes every phase of the woman's nature, from the first passionate impulse of evil to the remorse that cannot find refuge even in madness, and is only silenced by death.

On the threshold of this terrible adventure in what mood do we find them? The project, as we have seen, is no stranger to the breast of either, and yet with what strangely different effect has the poison worked its spell! They have been apart, and the soul of each has been thrown back upon itself. In the thick of action, "disdaining fortune with his brandished steel," Macbeth has become infirm of purpose: alone in her castle at Inverness, Lady Macbeth has brooded over the crime until it has completely possessed her. With the concentration of a woman's nature, she has driven from her brain all other thoughts save this: and she waits now with impatient expectancy for the hour that shall put her courage to the proof. Here, as we see, the divergence of sex has already asserted itself, working such a transformation that when they meet they scarcely recognise one another. The sudden coming of the occasion so long plotted and desired by both has hastened the development of individual character. He finds in the "dearest partner" of his greatness a being so formidable that he regards her for

COASTING BOHEMIA

the moment with feelings of mingled admiration and dismay :

Bring forth men-children only ;
For thy undaunted metal should compose
Nothing but males.

And though, with the woman's finer instinct, she has partly divined and anticipated his mood, she is appalled at the extent of the change it has wrought in him. Beneath the armour of the valiant soldier she finds, as she thinks, the trembling heart of a coward, and struck with sudden terror at his failing purpose, she tries to recall him to his former self :

When you durst do it, then you were a man ;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man.

From this moment they are strangers in spirit, though the old bond still holds them together. And yet to us, who view the whole picture with the poet's larger vision, the process of development moves in obedience to inevitable law. For at such a crisis it is natural in a man to anticipate : in a woman to remember ; on the eve of action he looks forward with apprehension : on the morrow she looks back with regret ; and while his nature is stronger in restraint, hers, on the contrary, surrenders itself more completely to the passion of remorse.

SEX IN TRAGEDY

The finer moral feelings of a woman are retrospective, for her imagination feeds and broods upon the past. She is often more intrepid in action because the intensity of her purpose bars the view of consequence; and whether the enterprise be heroic or malign, her indifference to danger, which then far surpasses the courage of man, is never so superbly illustrated as when she labours in his service, and not for any ends of her own. And so it happens that where she only follows she sometimes seems to lead, and the man, who has devised the policy which her readier resource only avails to carry into execution, appears in the guise of the reluctant victim of her stronger purpose and more undaunted will.

In order the better to exhibit these tendencies of her sex, Shakespeare has pictured for us in *Lady Macbeth* a woman of the highest nervous organisation, whose deep devotion gives to her character a passionate intensity of purpose that seems at times to be more than human. While the troubled surface of *Macbeth's* mind sends back but a blurred image of the dark secret that it hides, in her transparent nature the guilty project of his ambition is clearly and sharply mirrored. Before the murder of *Duncan* she can see nothing but the crime and its reward, that crime—

COASTING BOHEMIA

Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

Macbeth's message has reminded her that the time is drawing near, and she resolves to chase from his brain—

All that impedes thee from the golden round,
which the witches have placed upon his brow.
In the next moment she hears of the king's expected arrival, and then she knows that the hour so long awaited has come at last, and she nerves herself for the one supreme effort of her life :

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here ;
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty !

But it is a vain cry ; for throughout the terrible experiences of the next few hours the feminine nature is ever dominant. If there are no women save those who deal in gentle deeds, then Jael did not drive the nail into the forehead of Sisera, and it was not Judith's hand that compassed the death of Holofernes. And yet, if such as they were truly of the sex which claims them, by a still firmer title may we say of Lady Macbeth that she is every inch a

SEX IN TRAGEDY

woman. It is the woman who in this same scene greets her husband on his return :

Great Glamis ! worthy Cawdor !
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter !
Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant.

And in "the instant" she now lives, looking neither before nor after ; for the future that she sees stretches no further than the dreaded deed which is to bring fulfilment of all their cherished hopes. As she has shut out the past, with whatever compassionate scruples it might recall, so in like manner her fixed concentration on the business in hand excludes all vision of the time to come. If she had been endowed with Macbeth's imagination, which could ride so swiftly on the track of consequence, Duncan would indeed have gone forth on the morrow as he purposed. It needed this fatal combination to effect what neither would have accomplished alone—the man's guilty conception poisoning and possessing the woman's soul, the woman's surrender to his will so complete and passionate that when he falters she stands before him as the glittering image of his former self, a superb creation of his own brain, endowed with all, and more than all, the courage he had lost. This is Lady Macbeth on the eve of Duncan's

COASTING BOHEMIA

murder. From the moment that she perceives his wavering resolution she takes the yoke of action on to her own shoulders. She contrives and schemes every detail of the crime, and with ever-increasing impetuosity urges his failing footsteps towards the goal he now fears to reach. But the precious moments are speeding onward, and her passionate arguments seem powerless to lift his sickened spirit ; till at the last, with all the rhetoric of despair, she presents to his affrighted gaze a blackened image of herself, thinking, as well she may, that such a vision will prove more potent than curses to fan into flame the dying embers of his resolve :

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me ;
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.

It seems almost incredible, but it is nevertheless true, that this frenzied appeal has over and again been accepted as Lady Macbeth's judicial report upon her own character. A speech which is conceived in the most daring spirit of dramatic fitness, and which bears in every word the stamp of the special purpose for which it is uttered, is transformed into a prosaic statement of fact ; and we can only wonder we are not also invited to

SEX IN TRAGEDY

believe that this somewhat rigorous treatment of the young accounts for the fact that the play contains no mention of the lady's surviving offspring.

When the scene in which the awful passage occurs has drawn to its close, Lady Macbeth's task is already more than half accomplished. Her fiery eloquence has roused him from his stupor, and, inspired by the dauntless spirit which he had himself inspired, he bends up "each corporal agent to this terrible feat." But she does not rest until all is finished ; she never falters till the goal is passed. The woman's quivering nerves, more potent than the iron sinews of a giant, bear her up safely to the end ; and then, with a woman's weakness, they break, not beneath the weight they bear, but beneath the weight they have borne. So long as the need of action endures she remains unflinching and undismayed. It is she who drugs the grooms in preparation for the murder : it is she who at the supreme moment, when he can do no more, revisits the chamber of death to complete what he has left undone :

Infirm of purpose !

Give me the daggers : the sleeping and the dead

Are but as pictures : 'tis the eye of childhood

That fears a painted devil.

A speech which shows how little she knew herself ; for throughout all her brief after-life this picture of "the sleeping and the dead" is set

COASTING BOHEMIA

in flames before her haunted vision and burnt with fire into the depths of her soul.

From this time forward Macbeth and his wife change places. In outward seeming at least, their positions are reversed, though when we look beneath the surface there is an inexorable consistency in the conduct of both. He, whose imagination had foreseen all the consequences of this initial step in crime, braces himself without hesitation to the completion of his fatal task ; she, who had foreseen nothing, is thrown back upon the past, her dormant imagination now terribly alert, and picturing to her broken spirit all the horrors she had previously ignored. As the penalty of his crime is unrelenting action, her heavier doom is isolated despair ; and it is significant to observe that it is she who suffers most acutely all the moral torments he had only anticipated for himself. Macbeth indeed had “murdered sleep,” but it was her sleep he had murdered as well as his own ; and the blood that, he feared, not “all great Neptune’s ocean” would wash away, counts for little with one who afterwards plunged breast-high into the full tide of blood, but remains with her a haunting memory to the end. This change is already well marked in the scene immediately following the murder, when he suddenly wrests the conduct of affairs from her hands, and she sinks appalled at the

SEX IN TRAGEDY

dark vista of unending crime which his readiness in resource now first opens to her view. He who before had stood with trembling feet upon the brink of the stream now rushes headlong into the flood ; to complete the chain of suspicion, he murders the two grooms without an instant's hesitation ; and before the next Act opens he has already planned the death of Banquo and his son.

But from this point he proceeds alone. Her help is no longer needed, and even if it were not so, she has none now to give. "Naught's had, all's spent." Her dream is shattered ; the vision of glory is fled away into the night, and she who had felt "the future in the instant" can only brood over the wreck of the past. The crown for which she had struggled presses like molten lead into her brain ; the lamp which has lighted her so far only flings its rays backward on the blood-stained pathway she has trodden ; and, bitterest of all to her woman's soul, the evil she had wrought for his sake now breaks their lives asunder and parts them for ever. For his spirit has no access to the anguish of remorse that is fast hurrying her to the tomb, and she on her side can take no part in those darker projects with which he seeks to buttress the tottering fabric of his ambition. In all tragedy there is nothing so pitiful in its pathos as the passage in which she strives to grant to her husband the support of

COASTING BOHEMIA

which she herself stands so sorely in need. She feels instinctively that he shuns her company, and surmises that he too is suffering the lonely pangs of remorse, little guessing that he comes to her fresh from a new scheme of murder :

How now, my lord ? why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making ?
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on ? Things without all remedy,
Should be without regard : what's done, is done.

With what a jarring note comes his answer :

We have scotched the snake, not killed it.

And yet, despite this answer, with its clear indication of the true drift of his thoughts, she still fails to realise the gulf that divides them. All through the banquet scene she cannot rid herself of the belief that he is haunted, as she is haunted, by the vision of the murdered king, and even when he strips off the mask and bares the inner workings of his breast—

For mine own good,
All causes shall give way ; I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er,

she listens without understanding, and still interpreting his sufferings by her own, answers him from the sleepless anguish of her own soul :

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

SEX IN TRAGEDY

In the interval, before we meet Lady Macbeth again, and for the last time, she has learnt all ; and beneath the weight of her guilty knowledge her shattered nerves have snapped and broken. Throughout the wandering utterances of her dying hours her imagination is unalterably fixed upon the scene and circumstances of Duncan's death, but across this unchanging background flit other spectres besides that of the murdered king. Banquo is there, and Macduff's unhappy wife : she is spared no item in the dreary catalogue of her husband's crimes ; and yet, always overpowering these more recent memories, come the thick-crowding thoughts of that one fatal hour, when her spirit shot like a flame across the sky, and then fell headlong down the dark abyss of night.

The character of Macbeth standing in vivid contrast to that of his wife, has been subject to an equal amount of misconception, though of a different sort. He is commonly represented as being pursued by the constant warnings of conscience, which are only silenced by the evil ascendancy of the commanding figure at his elbow. But this is to antedate the action of the drama, and to mistake the real basis of his nature. If the voice of conscience ever gained a hearing, it was in some earlier hour, not pictured by Shakespeare, before this settled

COASTING BOHEMIA

scheme of murder had taken firm possession of his soul. The opening chorus of the witches, no less than the bearing of the man himself, warn us that he has long ceased to wrestle with the messengers of Heaven, and that he is now under the dominion of influences that have a different origin. The forces that sway Macbeth as we know him are intellectual rather than moral, and in order to exhibit more effectively that tendency to deliberation which is characteristic of his sex, Shakespeare has endowed him with the most potent imagination, which presents the consequences of conduct as clearly as though the secrets of the future were mirrored in a glass. It is not conscience, the whispered echo of eternal law, which causes him to falter on the verge of action : it is the instinct of security, which, as Hecate sings :

Is mortal's chiefest enemy.

And so indeed it proved ; for the initial step in crime once past, the very forces that had been strongest in restraint now carry him with unhalting speed through crime after crime, until his headlong course is stayed by the hand of Macduff. And seeing that Macbeth's keen vision had pictured what was in store for him, it is no wonder that he trembles with irresolute purpose while his wife's blind impulse moves

SEX IN TRAGEDY

with unbroken strength. In his case it is neither conscience nor cowardice that cries halt, but an imagination morbidly vivid and alert, which sees the oak in the acorn, and converts the trickling spring into the full tide of the river that rushes to the sea. All this is plainly imaged for us in the soliloquy that follows his first interview with his wife :

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly : if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,
With his surcease, success ; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But, in these cases,
We still have judgment here ; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor : this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips.

Then in the passage that follows he realises in more particular detail the horror and execration which such a deed will awaken. Duncan's virtues, he sees,

Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off :
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind.

COASTING BOHEMIA

Here we see set forth in clearest language both the scope and the limit of Macbeth's moral vision ; and as we note his growing irresolution, it is impossible not to be reminded of another of Shakespeare's characters in whom the imaginative temperament worked with equal potency. Macbeth and Hamlet are in some points strangely allied, but when they are placed side by side the elements of antagonism quickly overpower the outward appearance of similarity. Both were men in whom the supremacy of the imagination induced paralysis of action, but in the one case its exercise is bounded by the limits of our present world, and in the other it starts from the confines of mortal life and seeks to pierce the veil of eternity. Macbeth takes no heed of what may lurk in those dark recesses beyond the grave ; if he can only be assured of safety here he is ready to "jump the life to come." To Hamlet, on the other hand, the fortune of this world, and even death itself, are but as shadows, for his imagination is haunted by the mysteries of that unseen realm of which death is but the portal—

The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveller returns.

It is this which "puzzles the will" and arrests the uplifted arm, and though the voice that

SEX IN TRAGEDY

urges him to action comes to him from the grave, the very fact that the command is borne by a supernatural messenger suffices to ensure its neglect, and sends the imagination once more adrift upon the limitless ocean of eternity. Macbeth too trafficks in the supernatural, but with what different purpose and result ! He holds converse with the weird sisters only that Fate may echo the dark project he fears to utter ; and when he consults these "black and midnight hags" again, it is to wring from their lips the knowledge that may guide him still further in his settled career of crime. And they answer him according to his will. He is already far advanced in blood, but they beckon him still onward, and, speaking with the double tongue of hope and fear, bid him beware, and yet be bold, leading him by such sure steps to his doom that the struggle at last becomes almost sublime, and Fate, which he had rashly challenged, enters the lists against him.

When we have once grasped the motive-power of Macbeth's character, it is not difficult to reconcile the apparent inconsistency in his conduct before and after the murder of Duncan. By this one act his trembling hesitation is suddenly converted into an iron consistency of purpose. The view of consequence that had held him for a while irresolute on the threshold

COASTING BOHEMIA

of crime now becomes the strongest incentive to whatever may be needed to make his position secure. His imagination is thus both the source of inaction and the spur that urges him to morbid activity: it is at once the friend of conscience and its bitterest foe: at one moment the lamp that reveals to him his hideous design and all its attendant train of evil, in the next a lurid flame that lights up a thousand avenues of danger, only to be guarded by the exercise of a relentless cruelty and an unflinching courage. In nearly every utterance of Macbeth after the murder we are allowed to see how clearly he himself apprehends the danger of his position, and the sinister policy which it demands. "Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill"; and accordingly, with no more compunction than an executioner might feel, he proceeds in the course of action which he had foreseen from the first to be inevitable. Even his superstitious fears do not shake him in his resolve, and he has no sooner recovered from the vision of Banquo's ghost than he determines to visit again the weird sisters, that he may know "by the worst means the worst."

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
Which must be acted ere they may be scanned.

This is the first intimation that we have of

SEX IN TRAGEDY

any menace to the safety of Macduff, and when, in a following scene, Macbeth hears of his flight to England, he is full of self-reproaches for his procrastination in crime :

The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
Unless the deed go with it : from this moment,
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand.

And then, balked in his guilty designs upon the husband, he straightway resolves to wreak his vengeance upon his family :

The castle of Macduff I will surprise ;
Seize upon Fife ; and give to the edge o' the sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line.

Truly indeed and with prophetic vision had he said to his wife that he was "but young in deed," and that his terror at Banquo's ghost was only "the initiate fear that wants hard use."

And yet, despite this full revelation of the man's nature, who can fail to be moved by the splendid despair of his closing hours, when, with all the forces of heaven and earth arrayed against him, he struggles with dauntless courage to the end ? His imagination, still informing his shattered spirit, lights up the ruin of his life, and presents to his wearied gaze the hated object that he has become in the sight of all men :

COASTING BOHEMIA

My May of life

Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf :
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have ; but, in their stead,
Curses not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.

There is no refuge of madness for him. He has seen the end from the beginning, and even when the end has come it has no terror which he had not known long ago. This only is added to his earlier knowledge, though the truth, alas ! comes too late, that this present life, which he had held so dear, and for which he had sacrificed all, this life, which had been the tomb of his virtue, and of his honour, is

. . . but a walking shadow ; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more : it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

And so, with the “sound and fury” of this present world still ringing in his ears, he passes out into that “life to come” of which he had never dreamed at all.

HENRY IRVING

THE value of personality on the stage has rarely been exhibited with greater force than in the case of Sir Henry Irving. Nature had not specially equipped him for his calling ; in several respects, indeed, she had weighted him with disabilities which were destined to prove a serious hindrance in the progress of his career. But she had dowered him, as if by way of compensation, with a force and persistence of character that finally shaped for themselves a mode of expression which satisfied the demands of his ambition. And this sense of resident power was mirrored in the man himself, even in the earlier days when those physical peculiarities, which he never wholly lost, were, for the time, gravely imperilling his success upon the stage.

I met him first at the Old Albion Tavern in Drury Lane—a favourite haunt of actors that has long passed away—and I remember then that the man himself impressed me more deeply

COASTING BOHEMIA

than any of the few impersonations in which I had seen him. Already in his face and in his bearing he contrived to convey a curious sense of power and authority that he had not yet found the means to incorporate completely in his work upon the stage. I found myself vaguely wondering why he should have chosen the actor's calling as a means of impressing himself upon his generation, and yet at the time I felt a full assurance that in that or in some other walk of life he was bound to leave a mark upon his time. Johnson once said of Burke that if a stranger should take shelter beside him from the rain, he would part from him with the feeling that chance had brought him in contact with a remarkable man. Something of that same feeling was left in me as the impression drawn from my first meeting with Irving; and it is perhaps characteristic of that unnameable kind of force his personality suggested, that even at the zenith of his career, when he had won complete authority over a public that at first only reluctantly rallied to his banner, there was still room left for a measure of doubt as to whether his powers might not have found a fuller exercise in a different realm. It is, I think, however, an attribute of all the very highest achievement in any art that its authors, even when their special aptitude for the chosen

HENRY IRVING

medium of expression is full and complete, possess, by right of their genius, something more and something different in kind from that particular endowment which the art they have adopted calls into exercise. In Irving's case, this thought marked itself more deeply, because, as I have already hinted, his command of the special resources of his art was by no means complete, and his whole career may be said to have been a struggle, fiercer and more obstinate than most men have to wage, to secure, through the medium of the theatre, a full recognition of the latent forces he undoubtedly possessed.

He was conscious of that himself, and would often openly avow it ; very conscious, I mean, that, in a calling in which there is no escape from the physical presence of the artist, he had much to contend with. It made him quickly appreciative of the kind of perfection achieved by others in whom the motive and the means of expression were more finely attuned ; and he never wearied in later days of appraising this quality in the acting of Ellen Terry, whose varied gifts in the moment of perfection were combined in a fashion so easy and so absolute as sometimes almost to rob her of the praise due to conscious art.

Such appreciation would sometimes, though not so often, be extended to the comrades of his own sex ; and I recollect, during the time

COASTING BOHEMIA

when William Terriss was a member of his company, he would comment, with a sense of half-humorous envy, upon the ease and grace with which the younger actor could at once establish himself in the favour of his audience. But this recognition of the qualities he knew himself not to possess never, I think, for a moment shook his deeper conviction that, when he could subdue to the service of his art the more refractory elements of his own physical personality, he had a message to convey which would carry a deeper and more lasting impression.

And he proved by his career that he had a true title to that conviction. Force was always there, force that showed itself almost to the point of terror in his early impersonation of "The Bells." But sweetness and grace came not till later, and was only won as the reward of patient and unceasing effort: it was the case of the honeycomb bedded in the carcase of the lion, and it took all a lion's strength to reveal it to the world. In the man himself, however, as distinguished from his art, it was present from the first; and I recall, in those earlier days of our friendship, that a certain grave courtliness of bearing was among the first things that struck me. A certain sense of loneliness and isolation always belonged to him—the index, as it seemed to me, of a mind that was conscious that in his

HENRY IRVING

case the road towards fame must be trodden alone ; that such perfection as he could ultimately achieve could borrow little from example, but must be due to his own unaided subjugation of whatever in his individuality impeded his progress.

But this suggestion was never so far obtruded as to burden the freedom of personal intercourse, and my long association with him, in work or at play, is rich in the remembrance of many varied moods of a sweet and affectionate character. In common with all men who remain permanently attractive in companionship, he had a quick and delicate sense of humour, sometimes half-mischievous in its exercise, and touched now and then with a slightly saturnine quality, but always ready at call—even in his most serious moods.

One evening during a brief holiday with him in Paris it was somewhat roughly put to the test. We stood in a group of spectators watching the agile performances of some dancers who were exhibiting the wayward figures of the Can-Can, when one of the more adventurous of the troupe, greatly daring, suddenly lifted her foot and neatly removed the hat that Irving was wearing. The other spectators, some of whom, I think, had recognised the actor, and all of whom, as I had remarked, were attracted by his personality, stood in momentary wonder as to how this audacious act of familiarity might be received,

COASTING BOHEMIA

and I thought that I myself detected in Irving's face a momentary struggle between the dignity that was natural to him and the genial acceptance of the spirit of the place in which we found ourselves. But it was only momentary, and when he acknowledged with hearty laughter the adroitness of the performer, the Parisians around us found themselves free to indulge in the merriment which the look upon his grave, pale face had for the time held in check.

Upon such lighter phases of the life of the French capital Irving looked with a half-sinister tolerance.

That aspect of the character of the French people made no sympathetic appeal to him, but he watched their antics with unceasing interest rather as he might have watched the uncouth gambols of animals in a menagerie. But there was one of the shows of Paris which positively fascinated him, and that was the Morgue. Irving's mind was always attracted to the study of crime; he loved to trace its motives, to examine and to probe the various modes of the criminal character; and so it happened that, on one pretext or another, our morning wanderings nearly always led us back to this gruesome exhibition. One day the fancy seized him that a man who passed before one of the corpses and then returned to gaze upon it again was possibly

HENRY IRVING

the murderer himself ; and afterwards, while we were breakfasting at Bignons, he occupied himself with a sense of keen enjoyment in tracing in imagination the motive of the crime and the means by which it had been carried out.

At that time his thoughts were greatly occupied with the proposed revival of *Macbeth*, and on several evenings at the Hotel Bristol we sat long into the night discussing every phase of that greatest of all poetic tragedies. I think Irving felt—partly, perhaps, as the result of our many discussions—that in his earlier presentation of the play he had dwelt too insistently upon the purely criminal side of Macbeth's character to the neglect of its larger and more imaginative issues. I know, at any rate, that he was so far impressed with my view of the play, that he asked me to write an essay upon the subject which was to appear simultaneously with the revival ; and he did this in part, I believe, because the view I entertained of the interplay of motive between Macbeth and his guilty partner went far to supplant that masculine conception of Lady Macbeth's character which had hitherto been imposed upon the world mainly through the genius of Mrs. Siddons. The essay, no less than the performance, proved, as we had expected, the mark for much hostile criticism ; but the revival—interesting to me

COASTING BOHEMIA

in many respects—illustrated with surprising force the extraordinary advance in his art which had been made by Irving since the earlier production of the play—an advance not merely of technical resource, but even more as showing the larger and profounder spirit in which he could now approach the poetic drama.

Nearly all our excursions abroad were in some way associated with work projected or already in hand, and it was while he was preparing Mr. W. G. Wills's version of *Faust* that we made together a long and delightful excursion to Nuremberg. Irving was very anxious to find something that was both quaint and characteristic for the scene of Margaret's Garden, and although he was not very fond of physical exercise, he never wearied of our constant tramps among the narrower streets of the old German city in inquisitive search for something that should fit with the ideal that he had in his mind. We trespassed freely wherever we found an open gateway; and at last, having failed to discover what was exactly suited to the purpose, we set out one day for Rothenburg on the Tauber—one of the most perfect and complete examples of a mediaeval city, and where, as we were assured, we should find richer material than was provided in Nuremberg itself.

At that time the journey between Nuremberg

HENRY IRVING

and Rothenburg had to be made mainly by road ; the railway carried us only half-way, and then we had a drive of several hours before reaching our destination. I think it was this that mainly attracted Irving in undertaking the excursion. All through his life he dearly loved the pleasure of a drive ; and during a week I spent with him at Lucerne, our every day, for six or seven hours at a stretch, was employed in exploring the shores of the lake. Rothenburg, as it chanced, furnished us with little new material towards the object of which we were in quest, and on our return to Albert Durer's city, feeling that he had exhausted all the available means of inquiry, he at once, with characteristic promptitude, summoned the scenic artist, Mr. Hawes Craven, from London in order that he might make notes on the spot of the several scenes of the drama.

At home or abroad, Irving was always at his best as a host, and, whether in the larger entertainments which he sometimes gave on the stage of the Lyceum, or in the more intimate gatherings in the Beefsteak Room, he presided with admirable grace over a company that was often strangely varied in its composition—the most distinguished statesmen, soldiers, and men of letters, meeting in happy association with chosen members of his own profession. Two

COASTING BOHEMIA

little incidents recur to me which illustrate in their different ways that sense of humour, sometimes innocently mischievous, and sometimes again employed for a long settled purpose of deliberate attack. The first of these occasions was a dinner given in honour of the members of the Saxe-Meiningen company on the stage of the theatre. I had been driving with him during the day, and happened to mention, to his manifest surprise, that I had not seen their great performance of the play of *Julius Caesar* which was making a considerable stir in London. He said nothing more at the time, but at the end of the evening's feast, after having himself in a few words gracefully welcomed his distinguished guests, he announced that he would now call upon Mr. Comyns Carr, who he felt sure would do ample justice to the exquisite art of these German players. I can see now the smile upon his face as he sat down, and left me to my task, of which I acquitted myself with at least so much skill, that he was the only one among those present who was aware that I was wholly unacquainted with the subject I had been summoned to discuss.

The other incident to which I have referred had a more serious import. During his first visit to America his feelings had been gravely outraged, and not on his own account alone, by a series of

HENRY IRVING

scandalous articles which had appeared in one of the most popular of New York journals. Our party that evening at supper in the Beefsteak Room included a popular American Colonel, a great friend of Irving's, and, as Irving well knew, a great friend also of the wealthy proprietor of this offending journal. The scene was wholly characteristic of Irving, who rarely forgot an injury, although he was content sometimes to lie long in wait for the fitting occasion to strike a counter-blow. In a genial prelude he led our American friend on in a growing crescendo of praise of the amiable qualities of the wealthy newspaper proprietor. "You know so-and-so," he innocently remarked to his guest, as he settled himself down in his chair, in an attitude that not uncommonly conveyed to those who knew him that danger might be impending. "Know him!" replied the innocent Colonel, "I have known him all my life." "Quite so," said Irving; "good fellow, isn't he?" "Good! He's one of the very best fellows that was ever born." "The kind of man," pursued Irving, "who would never do an ungenerous or an unkind thing?" And at this, lured on to his doom, the unsuspecting Colonel burst forth in such unrestrained eulogy of his friend, as to depict for the admiration of those present a character of almost unchallenged per-

COASTING BOHEMIA

fection. "No doubt ; no doubt," responded Irving ; "no doubt he is all that you say" ; and then, in words all the deadlier for the perfect quietude of tone in which they were uttered, he added : "But he is also one of the damned'st scoundrels that ever stepped the earth." The genial Colonel was not unnaturally taken aback ; but before he could make any show of defence, Irving had whipped from his breast-pocket the series of offending articles, and, handing them across the table, made the simple comment, "I thought, old friend, you might be interested to see them."

It was, I think, in the beginning of the year 1892 that Irving invited me to write for him a play on the subject of King Arthur. The theme had long been in his mind, and before his death Mr. Wills had completed a version, which proved, however, unacceptable to the actor. At first Irving thought that I might find it possible to recast and remodel Wills's work ; but it was afterwards agreed between us that I should be free to work out my own design. When my task was completed, Irving and Miss Terry came one night to dine with us in Blandford Square. He brought with him also his little dog Fussy, the constant companion of many years. And when dinner was over, he settled himself down in an arm-chair, with the dog upon his knees, pre-

HENRY IRVING

pared for an ordeal that is never wholly agreeable either to the author or his auditor. I know that I was nervous enough, as I always am on such occasions; and when I was about half-way through, the audible sounds of snoring which reached my ears made me fancy in my morbid state of sensitiveness that I had failed to grip or to hold the attention of the man I so strongly desired to please. Still I plodded on, not daring to lift my eyes from the book, and still the stertorous sounds continued, until at last, exasperated beyond endurance, I closed the book, with the abrupt announcement that I felt it useless to go on. "What do you mean?" inquired Irving, in blank amazement. "Why, you were asleep," I replied; but even as I spoke, I perceived the ridiculous blunder into which I had fallen, for the snoring still continued without interruption, and, lifting my eyes, I saw Miss Terry, with laughing gesture, pointing to the sleeping terrier still resting upon Irving's knees. I had "tried it on the dog," and it was the dog I had failed to please.

My association with Irving during the preparation of *King Arthur* was wholly interesting and delightful. I had been warned by those who had long worked with him in the theatre that Irving was intolerant of interference, and that I would do well not to assume any position

COASTING BOHEMIA

of authority in the direction of the rehearsals. My own experience, however, completely belied this warning ; from the first he treated me with the utmost consideration, and invited, rather than repressed, the suggestions I had to make. His own work at rehearsal was always deeply interesting to watch, though it often revealed little more than the mechanical part of his own performance. This, however, he fixed with absolute exactitude, and the minute invention of detail which he displayed sufficed to suggest that in his own private study of the part this fabric of mechanism was already wedded to the emotional message he intended to convey. As a rule, he was word-perfect before the rehearsals of any play began, and this left him free to bestow infinite patience and pains upon the work of others. He would go through the whole of any one of the minor parts, instructing the actor in every detail of gesture and movement ; and when it came to scenes in which he himself was concerned, he knew precisely—and could precisely realise—the pace and the tone that were needed to achieve the effect he desired.

A SENSE OF HUMOUR

I SUPPOSE no man at this time of day would have the temerity to hazard a definition of humour. It has been often attempted, never, however, with any convincing success; and sometimes with such cumbrous elaboration of thought as to leave upon the reader only the desolating impression that the philosopher was wholly lacking in the quality which he sought to define. Nor is its presence so common even in those who most loudly deplore its absence in others. I have heard the dullest of men lament the fact that God has denied it to women, and the fleeting smile with which such an announcement is sometimes received by their wives goes far to prove that even the intimate association of marriage has not sufficed for the full appreciation of character.

In its larger and more elemental forms humour is certainly one of the rarest of human attributes; and even the appreciation of humour in that broader and deeper sense is not quite so common

COASTING BOHEMIA

as is generally supposed. There is quite a considerable body of seemingly educated opinion which would concede to Shakespeare every gift except the gift of humour ; persons who would regard Falstaff as a quite inconsiderable creation, and who would dismiss Dogberry and the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* as negligible portraits in the great Shakespearean gallery. Once I remember hearing this view put forward very confidently in the presence of a brilliant essayist, whose grave demeanour gave the critic some ground for the belief that his unfavourable opinion would meet with ready acceptance. After holding forth at some length upon what he deemed to be this rather puerile aspect of Shakespeare's genius, he ventured at the finish upon the direct inquiry : " Now what, sir, do you think of Shakespeare's humour ? " To which the reply came in very quiet tones : " Well, the trouble is, there is no other."

The proposition need not be taken too literally, but it contains a truth that cannot be ignored. Shakespeare's humour is as directly and as legitimately the fruit of his wide and deep love of life as the most sublime of his tragic creations. The mind that drew the portrait of Falstaff owns and claims the same large handwriting as that which revealed the character of Macbeth ; in both there is an equal measure of mastery. And

A SENSE OF HUMOUR

that, naturally, suggests an element in humour which, without risking the imprudence of definition, may be said to separate it from mere wit. The man of wit may distinguish and reveal the incongruities of life but the humorist, not only perceives them, but loves the characters in which they reside. Among the humorists I have met, this essential gift of sympathy has always, as it seems to me, been a constant and dominating force. It was not my fortune to know Charles Dickens, but his transcendent humour may be said to have dominated all who came within the reach and range of his genius ; and it may surely be said of him, as it may be said of Shakespeare, that he not only saw where the sources of laughter lay, but that he loved the thing he made laughable.

This was equally true of Bret Harte, who in our talks together would always willingly own his obligations to the great master ; and there is certainly no more touching tribute to Dickens's genius than is contained in the little poem with which Bret Harte greeted the news of his death. As is not uncommon with men of creative humour, Bret Harte, in ordinary converse, gave little hint of its possession. A man of grave and reticent bearing, he made no attempt to shine as a talker ; and as far as my experience went, rarely sought to draw the conversation into literary

COASTING BOHEMIA

channels. He deliberately, as it would seem, kept all that concerned his work as an artist in a world apart ; and his charm in companionship—which was not inconsiderable—suggested rather the tenderness and sympathy in his outlook on life than his equal gift of humorous appreciation. Those earlier meetings of the Kinsmen Club, of which Bret Harte was a member, brought together many humorous spirits, and amongst them George du Maurier and poor Randolph Caldecott, who, although he too owned a grave exterior, partly due to frailty of health, could on occasion break out into a frolic mood that was irresistible in its sense of fun.

But the draughtsmen for *Punch* in those days, even when, as in the case of du Maurier and Charles Keene, they could boast a higher measure of purely artistic accomplishment, were hardly comparable in their grasp of what is essentially comic in character with their predecessor, John Leech ; and if we turn from the work they produced to the men themselves, it was not the possession of a sense of humour which formed the main element in the social charm they exercised. Du Maurier, in his conversation, never sought to exhibit or to exploit this particular side of his talent ; and in our many talks upon the subject of art it was evident that he

A SENSE OF HUMOUR

was rather on the alert to recognise what was seriously beautiful in the work of his contemporaries. He never tired in praise of Millais whom, I think, he ranked as the supreme master of his time ; and, on the other hand, he never quite settled in his mind, even up to the end of his life, what measure of welcome to accord to the widely different gifts of Rossetti and Burne-Jones.

But although his talk was, for the most part, serious in tone, he could show himself on occasion to be possessed of the wildest high spirits, and it was then he most clearly revealed the qualities that were distinctively his in virtue of his partly foreign extraction.

Indeed among the men who practised this branch of art, I have known only two who in personal intercourse gave any complete indication of the humorous powers they possessed. Perhaps neither Phil May nor Fred Barnard have yet received their full meed of praise, and yet in them, rather than in their better known contemporaries, the tradition of the earlier humorists survives. In one sense they may be said to have shared between them the mantle of John Leech, and they possessed this quality in common, that their perception of the sources of laughter in life was as clearly betrayed in personal association as in the work that came from their hand. Phil

COASTING BOHEMIA

May's face was in itself a highly-coloured print that made an instant appeal to any one endowed even with a most rudimentary sense of humour, and his talk, though it affected no brilliancy, very clearly revealed the fact that the little pageant of life which came within the range of his vision struck itself at once into humorous outline. He hardly saw life, indeed, in any other frame, and the few finely selected lines with which he registered the images that presented themselves to his imagination seemed by instinctive preference to exclude and to dismiss those graver realities that were not his especial concern. And yet so keen and so sure was his touch of life that now and again his hand would outrun his purpose, and leave, even upon the slightest drawing, a suggestion of almost tragic import underlying its laughing message. Fred Barnard was a humorist through and through—at work or at play his eye lighted unerringly on whatever might enrich his humorous experience, and he was quick to detect, though never with any lack of urbanity, the little foibles of those with whom he was brought into contact.

But I suppose it is to the stage that one's thoughts must naturally turn for the most telling exposition of this particular quality. Nearly all the comedians I have known have seemed to accept it as a part of the duty which their pro-

A SENSE OF HUMOUR

fession imposes on them, that they should be as amusing in the world as in the theatre. It cannot be said, according to my own experience, that they have always been successful, and I may even go so far as to say that the laboured efforts of the wilfully comic man mark off in remembrance some of the dullest hours I have passed. The penalty of the perpetual jester very often, as one would think, a grievous burden to himself, falls sometimes with even heavier incidence upon those he has doomed to be amused.

I know it is a prevalent belief among Americans that we English are wholly devoid of that sense of humour in which many of their own countrymen undoubtedly excel ; and it may perhaps, therefore, shock them to learn that, to a taste differently educated, the unremitting efforts of some of their professional jesters are apt on occasion to appear a little overstrained. But in some natures the appetite for the ceaseless flow of comic anecdote is swiftly satisfied, and the man who will insist upon unpacking his wallet of well-worn stories for the intended delight of his fellows may, if he is not watchful of the effect he is producing, induce in the mind of his audience a mood of settled sadness, that not even the genius of a Dickens could lift or lighten.

This haunting fear lest conversation should at any point take a serious note—which I cannot

COASTING BOHEMIA

help thinking characteristic of many Americans —is often to be found in our own country in the person of the comedian by profession. It existed perhaps in a lesser degree in J. L. Toole than any other representative of his calling whom I have intimately known. What rendered Toole delightful in companionship was rarely anything memorable that he said, for he made no effort to pose as a wit, and his reminiscent humour, which he could always summon at need, was for the most part introduced in illustration of some point of character humorously perceived and presented. There are critics who have questioned his appeal as a comedian in the theatre, but no one brought into personal contact with him could be left in any doubt as to the swiftness and sureness of his vision in detecting and enjoying the little foibles of those around him. In any company, whatever its composition, his mind got quickly to work upon each individuality in the group; and, although he might not join largely in the conversation, he loved to impart to the companion by his side his keen sense of enjoyment of the conflict and interplay of character as it presented itself at the table.

Toole was a constant guest at those pleasant little suppers in the Beefsteak Room of the Lyceum Theatre over which Irving so gracefully presided; and if one had the good fortune to be

A SENSE OF HUMOUR

his neighbour it was always delightful to watch the expression of his swiftly-glancing, laughing eyes and mobile mouth, as they mirrored, in hardly-restrained amusement, his inward enjoyment of the changing humours of the scene. Nothing characteristic escaped him, however widely divergent the personalities that came within the range of his vision ; but his quickness of perception, ever ready to register and record the little foibles of each member of the company, bred in him no feeling of resentment, but seemed rather to add to the rich store of enjoyment which, in his happier moods, life always afforded him. I say in his happier moods, because even in the earlier days of our friendship, when his vitality was unimpaired, his exuberant high spirits were subject to sudden clouds of deep depression that seemed for the time to banish all laughter from his life.

Like Irving, he was an inveterately late sitter, and the many occasions that found them together—either at the theatre or at the Garrick Club—rarely witnessed their parting till the morning hours were far spent. In Toole's case, I know, this reluctance to break in upon the long duration of these social hours sprang in part out of a haunting terror of the sadder thoughts that might overtake him when he was driven back upon himself. He would often confess to me,

COASTING BOHEMIA

as we drove home, his constant dread of these night fears, that were chiefly dominated at that time by the recurring image of his only son, whose early death remained with him to the end as an ineffaceable source of sorrow. And yet, while we talked of these sadder things, it was sometimes irresistibly comic to notice, as we drew towards his house, how this deeper grief would then be exchanged for a terror of a nearer kind, for he was always at these moments very conscious that his persistently late habits—so often repented of, but never reformed—would surely draw down upon him severe domestic rebuke. And even when the cab had reached his door, he would hold me prisoner in whispered converse in order to postpone, as long as he could, the dread moment when he would have to face the salutary lecture that was in store for him.

But for the most part he was the gayest and most light-hearted of companions, forcing out of the most unhopeful material a rich yield of fun and frolic. At home or abroad he was never at a loss for the means of filling an empty day. Sometimes, in his ceaseless tendency towards practical joking, he would place himself in positions that other men might have found embarrassing and even dangerous. But there was something so infectious in his humour, and in

A SENSE OF HUMOUR

his good humour, that even on the Continent, where he could speak no language but his own, he was always able to extricate himself with success from difficulties that would have left many graver men without resource.

He dearly loved the excitement of the gaming table, whether at Monte Carlo or elsewhere ; and I remember, during a holiday that we passed together at Aix-les-Bains, that he did his best to imperil the good effects of his cure by his constant attendance at the Cercle and the Villa des Fleurs. It was difficult to drag him from the table, however late the hour, for his pathetic reply to every remonstrance took the form of a solemn promise that he would absolutely go to bed as soon as the little pile before him was exhausted ; a reply, the humour of which he was himself only half-conscious, for it pointed to the inevitable loss that was the final result of all his gambling transactions. After a night wherein he had been more than usually successful in exhausting the ready cash he carried about him, we made our way in the morning to the little bank in the main street of Aix-les-Bains, in order that he might make a fresh draft upon his letter of credit.

But he did not at once reveal to the clerk in charge his serious intent. Tapping lightly at the closed window of the *guichet*, he inquired,

COASTING BOHEMIA

in broken English, which he appeared strangely to believe would be somehow comprehensible to his foreign interlocutor, whether the bank would be prepared to make him a small advance upon a gold-headed cane which he carried in his hand. The request, as might be supposed, was somewhat briskly dismissed, and the little window was abruptly closed in his face. Toole retired apparently deeply dejected by the refusal of his prayer; but in a few minutes he returned to the attack, having in the meantime provided himself with fresh material for a new financial proposition. Hastening out into the little market that lay near the bank, he hurriedly purchased from one of the fish-stalls a small pike that had been caught in the lake, and, having added to this a bunch of carrots, he returned to the bank, where he carefully arranged these proffered securities on the counter, enforced by the addition of his watch and chain, a three-penny bit, and a penknife. When all was ready he again tapped softly at the window, and, in a voice that was broken by sobs, implored the clerk, in view of his unfortunate position, to accept these ill-assorted articles in pledge for the small sum which was needed to save him from starvation. The clerk, by this time grown indignant, requested him to leave the establishment, explaining to him in emphatic terms, and

A SENSE OF HUMOUR

in such English as he could command, that they only made advances upon circular notes or letters of credit. At the last-named word Toole's saddened face suddenly broke into smiles, and, producing his letter of credit, he handed it to the astonished clerk, with the added explanation that he would have offered that at first if he had thought the bank cared about it, but that the porter at the hotel had told him the bankers of Aix liked fish better.

This is only a sample of the kind of adventure that Toole loved to create for himself and which he carried through with the keenest zest and enjoyment. His invention in such matters never flagged, and I have often been his companion through the whole of an idle day, during which he would keep us both fully employed in the prosecution of these boyish frolics, that may seem foolish enough in narration, but were irresistible in their appeal, owing to the unalloyed pleasure they brought him in their progress. I have known many men who deem themselves adepts at this kind of sport, but none who were so convincing in their methods—none, certainly, who took such an honest pleasure in their work, or who used such infinite pains in carrying the projected little plot to a successful issue.

Once at Ramsgate he contrived to relieve the

COASTING BOHEMIA

tedium of a Sunday afternoon by calling at nearly every house in a long and respectable terrace, charged with a mission that was foredoomed to failure. As each door was opened Toole stood on the step, his face distorted by signs of emotion, that for the moment deprived him of all powers of speech, and when at last, in response to the angry inquiry of a maid-servant, he contrived to regain a measure of self-control, it was only to beg, in tearful accents, for the loan of "a small piece of groundsel for a sick bird." As door after door was slammed in his face, his high spirits correspondingly increased, his only fear being, as he afterwards explained to me, lest some one of the peaceful inhabitants whose Sabbath repose he had so ruthlessly disturbed should, by an evil chance, have possessed the remedy he so persistently sought.

SITTING AT A PLAY

THE child's love of the drama begins long before there is any thought of a playhouse. To escape from life in order to rediscover it in mimic form, would seem to rank among the earliest of human impulses. We are all born actors, though some of us—and this is true even of those who adopt the stage as a profession—would seem occasionally to part with this primitive instinct in later life. But an average child has no sooner entered this world than he finds himself pursued by the longing to create another: he has scarcely had time to recognise his own identity before he seeks to hide it beneath the mask of an alien personality. How far the youthful histrion believes himself to be a lion when he crawls across the drawing-room carpet on all fours, and roars from behind the sofa, is perhaps open to argument. My own belief is that he is already so much of an artist as to be in no way deceived, but of his desire to impose upon the credulity of others there can, I think,

COASTING BOHEMIA

be no question. But the limits of histrionic enjoyment are even here sometimes overstepped, as, for example, when a maturer rival in the art, boasting a louder roar, approaches too closely to the confines of absolute illusion. The enjoyment of the art as an art is then rudely disturbed, and, shaken with sudden terror, the infant Roscius is once more driven back upon that actual world from which it had been his pride and desire to escape.

This may be cited as an early instance of the intemperate employment of the resources of realism, which in later life, when sitting at a play, we have so often just reason to deplore. Again, the sudden assumption by a too eager elder of a woolly hearth-rug may ruin at a stroke the child's purely imaginative vision that he is in the society of a bear. Natural terror expels in an instant that higher emotion which the drama is designed to create. The child recognises that the irrefutable laws of the art have been rudely broken, to his own discomfort ; and it is always interesting to note on such occasions with what quick and easy resource he will suddenly change the whole subject and scope of the mimic performance, imperiously demanding that the bear shall be exchanged for a horse, or some other domestic animal, whose milder tendencies may be the more readily endured,

SITTING AT A PLAY

even when the actor is forgetful of the proper restraints of his art.

It is what survives of the child in us that makes us all playgoers, although in the early days of our playgoing the unsuspected resources of illusion which the theatre can command are often hard to endure. It is, I suppose, the experience of most children—it certainly was mine—that certain critical moments in drama, clearly foreseen and eagerly anticipated, nevertheless prove in realisation too thrilling and too intense for pure delight ; and I can recall occasions, such desired moments being clearly in view, when I would address a whispered request to one of my elders that I might be permitted to watch the ensuing scene from the safe vantage ground of the corridor at the back of the dress circle. The small glass window in the red baize door provided just that added veil of distance which rendered the sufferings of the persons on the stage artistically tolerable. But the crisis once past—a crisis generally signalled by the explosion of a pistol—I was eager to return to my seat in order to appreciate with unabated enjoyment the consequences of an act of violence I had not had the courage to witness.

It is remarkable how little, in those very early days of playgoing, we are at all concerned with the personality of the actor. The story is all-absorbing, and in the poignant interest in the

COASTING BOHEMIA

persons of the story, all memory of the performer as a separate entity is submerged and effaced. I had no thought at that time whether the actor was good or bad. His performance appeared to me to be inevitable and inevitably perfect. The day when he takes separate existence, apart from the character he is presenting, marks a revolution in the life of the playgoer, a revolution that is destined henceforward to complicate his emotions, with never again any possible return to that earlier and more confiding attitude when the illusion of the scene is absolute and complete. It is difficult even to recall the names of the actors who first greatly stirred me. They hardly stain my memory, for in my mind they had no separate existence. But with this revolution is born a new kind of enjoyment, that carries richer recollections. The limitless world of illusion shrinks to a narrower kingdom, but its triumphs are more vivid and more enduring : the sense of assumption and disguise is no longer so complete or so convincing, but the message of revelation, when it comes, brings with it a higher pleasure.

Nothing lives longer in remembrance, or pictures itself more vividly, than the first impression of the performance of a great actor. Phelps was the earliest of my heroes of this more sophisticated time, and the first of his performances I can recall was that of Falstaff in

SITTING AT A PLAY

King Henry IV. produced at Drury Lane. Walter Montgomery was the Hotspur of the occasion, and young Edmund Phelps figured as Prince Hal. First impressions are hard to supplant, and the visual presentment of Falstaff even now always takes the form and shape assigned to him by the elder Phelps on that memorable evening. I saw him many times afterwards—in *Othello* and *King John*, in Mephistopheles, in Bayle Bernard's version of Goethe's play, in *Wolsey*, in *Sir Pertinax M'Sycophant*, and in *John Bull*; and, although the more critical spirit of a later hour left him shorn of some part of that perfection I thought was his when I first saw him upon the stage, he ranks even now in my recollection as a great and gifted exponent of a great tradition. In his personality there was little to allure. It was rugged and bereft of many of the lighter graces that are calculated to win an audience; but his voice was incomparable, and the earnestness of the artist beyond reproach. Nor could variety of resource be denied him: he seemed equally equipped for his task as *King John*, *Wolsey*, or *Falstaff*, or as Bottom in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. He fought his way to a front rank in the profession at a time when older playgoers were full of memories of men who were perhaps his superiors—of Kemble, Kean,

COASTING BOHEMIA

and, more recently, of Macready. But whatever he owed to any of them—and I do not suppose he was ever tempted to deny his debt—it is impossible not to concede to him a rare measure of individual power that must always leave him his due rank among the English interpreters of Shakespeare.

It must have been my first vision of Charles Fechter which enabled me to realise as by a flash how much Phelps suffered by lack of personal charm and grace. In those days I had not seen Fechter in Shakespeare. I knew him only as the victorious lover and the conquering hero of romantic drama. But, however conventional the material upon which his talent was employed, the glamour of his personality exercised an overpowering fascination.

To the youth of both sexes Fechter's foreign accent constituted a charm in itself. The rising cadence of his voice struck heroically on the ear, and the swifter and freer gesture which came of his Gallic origin added something of extra fascination to the unquestionably great gifts with which he was endowed. In those days of the old Lyceum, when he was acting in melodramas like *The Duke's Motto* and *Bel Demonio*, Miss Kate Terry was constantly his partner and the two together seemed to embody for the time the whole spirit of romance.

SITTING AT A PLAY

But the moment of Fechter's acting which is stamped most firmly in my recollection was in the last act of *Ruy Blas*. It was not till long afterwards when growing stoutness had robbed him of that grace of form which belonged to his earlier days, that I saw him in the part of *Hamlet*, and it is perhaps hardly fair to test his fitness as a Shakespearean actor by such later impressions. To me, however, that foreign cadence, which linked itself so well with the impersonation of romantic heroism, left a jarring note when it was yoked with the statelier measure of English verse; and it was not till long afterwards, when I saw Irving's *Hamlet*, that I realised for the first time how much of the subtlety of the character and beauty of the play could be realised within the walls of a theatre.

The playgoer's memories refuse to obey any strict chronological order. They are rather governed by vividness of impression, which summons with equal distinctness things seen long ago and triumphs of a more recent date. My first vision of Sarah Bernhardt retains always a foremost place in my playgoing experience. It was in Paris in the spring of 1876, and the play was *L'Étrangère*. She was surrounded by a company of rare distinction—Coquelin, Croisette, and Mounet-Sully amongst them. But I remember, as she came

COASTING BOHEMIA

upon the stage, that a creature almost of another race seemed suddenly to have invaded, and, at a single stroke, to be dominating, the scene. Her personality appeared at once to announce a new dialect in the language of Art. Her mode of speech and her method of acting left almost unregarded and unremembered the particular language in which the play was written. In virtue of her genius she became at once an international possession, leaving, by comparison, the artists around her almost provincial in style and method. I had previously seen Ristori, and had marvelled at the wonders of her art in *Lucrezia Borgia* and in *Mary Stuart*, an art that was struck in a larger mould than Sarah Bernhardt could claim; and I afterwards had to acknowledge the superb force and matchless physical resource which Salvini brought to the theatre. But in neither case does the first impression stand out so vividly in recollection as that first impression of Sarah Bernhardt in Dumas' play. And yet I remember Sir Frederick Leighton, whose recollections of the theatre went back to an earlier day, telling me that the effect produced by Rachel left Sarah Bernhardt's art by comparison almost in the region of the commonplace.

I have mentioned the name of Coquelin, whose talent in the region of comedy was consummate, and even in this very performance

SITTING AT A PLAY

of *L'Étrangère* his impersonation of the Duc de Septmonts leaves an ineffaceable recollection. But I had already seen him in Molière, and it was the endless resource with which he furnished the creations of the master dramatist of France that gives him, I think, his unapproachable place in the modern theatre. His own rich enjoyment of every discovered detail of the carefully constructed portrait carried with it the magic of infection, and, as the work grew under his hand, the spectator was left with a pitiful consciousness of his own dulness in having gathered from the written page so small a part of the author's manifest intention. In so far as the actor's art seeks for the triumphs of assumption and disguise, Coquelin was, indeed, beyond the reach of rivalry, and it was perhaps pardonable, in view of his own splendid achievement, that he should have been disposed to question the claims of those whose mastery in this particular direction was not so complete as his own. Coquelin to the last was intolerant of all acting which allowed the personality of the performer to override the identity of the particular character to be presented. He could be admiring, and even enthusiastic, over the art of Irving, but always with an implied reservation—the English actor never, to his thinking, sufficiently effaced himself in his part; the performance, however brilliant

COASTING BOHEMIA

in intellectual force, was marred, in Coquelin's judgment, by an imperfect surrender of personality, and by a corresponding incompleteness of assumption. And that was an unforgivable sin in the eyes of the French artist.

It was agreeable to discuss these matters with Coquelin, for he was a brilliant talker, quick in insight, and ever ready with the terse and fit phrase to illustrate his meaning. And it was peculiarly interesting to me, because the argument touched upon problems in the actor's art that I have always thought to be profoundly significant. How far may the personality of the performer intrude itself in the presentation of the chosen character, and to what extent are assumption and disguise part of the indispensable equipment of the artist? These are questions which every generation is apt to raise in regard to its popular favourites upon the stage. And the answer is not easy to find. To very many it will seem indisputable that versatility carries with it the hall-mark of perfection, and that no actor can claim absolute victory in any individual achievement unless we are allowed completely to forget the person in the impersonation. Such critics are the avowed champions of the art of disguise, and yet, to me at least, they leave out of account the most profound and most memorable impressions which the theatre is able to

SITTING AT A PLAY

yield. The scenes which have most deeply moved me, the performers whose art has stirred me to the strongest emotion, are hardly associated in memory with any particular triumph of characterisation. It is, in short, not disguise, but revelation, which evokes and demands the highest histrionic gifts. The ingenuity and resource that can distinguish and exhibit the markings of varying personality must, of course, always count for much, but the imaginative power which can recreate upon the scene the simpler and deeper emotions that are common to us all must surely count for more; and in the exercise of this higher power the lighter accessories employed to achieve completeness of disguise must often be discarded and forgotten, as the actor's personality, impatient of all lesser fetters that impede its utterance, becomes wholly engaged in the task of communicating to his audience the deeper and more enduring passions of our common humanity.

Of course, some may dream that these opposite qualities may be combined. I have never seen them combined in any measure of completeness. I remember thinking, when I first saw Sarah Bernhardt in *Frou-Frou*, that her portraiture fell far short of that of Desclée, the original creator of the rôle. And so, in fact, it did. The countless subtleties, by means of which the earlier

COASTING BOHEMIA

performer had established the identity of the frivolous heroine of one of the most masterly of modern French plays, were all lacking in the work of her successor ; but in the great scene in the third act, where the tensivity of the situation sounds a deeper note of drama, I felt disposed to forget that any other *Frou-Frou* had ever existed. Another illustration pointing in the same direction may be found in the exquisite art of the Italian actress, Eleanora Duse. When I saw her in the *Dame aux camélias* it was impossible to believe even for a moment that this perfect embodiment of all that is beautiful in feminine nature owned even the remotest relationship to the courtesan whom Dumas had set himself to present upon the stage. The unconquerable purity of her artistic personality left her helpless in the presence of her chosen task. As mere assumption the performance counted for next to nothing, and yet in its exquisite power to reveal the ever-deepening emotions of a suffering human soul it was incomparable and superb. It chanced that only three nights afterwards I saw Sarah Bernhardt in this same play, and the contrast was striking and instructive. It might have been another story ; it certainly was another and a widely different character. Possibly neither artist rendered faithfully the author's intention, and yet both had produced an impression of intense enjoy-

SITTING AT A PLAY

ment, such as the theatre is rarely able to confer.

On both of these evenings I had the good fortune to sit beside Miss Ellen Terry, whose presence in the theatre I think contributed in no small degree to the almost inspired performances of her comrades upon the stage. I am not indiscreet enough to reveal her comparative judgment of their competing claims, but I remember considering at the time how far her own presentation of Marguerite Gauthier, if she had ever undertaken the part, would have compared with the conception of either. Here, again, is an instance of an artist who has never sought, or who has sought in vain, to hide her own identity ; and yet of those who have felt the magic of her influence in the ideal figure of Ophelia, in the exquisite raillery of Beatrice, or in the tender sentiment of Olivia, who is there who would deny her right to the foremost place in her profession ? With her most surely the final effect and impression rest upon powers of revelation—upon the ability to realise and to interpret the simplest and the subtlest phases of emotion, far more than upon those artifices of deception that make for the more obvious triumphs of disguise.

It may, of course, be conceded that in his critical and discriminating judgment of Irving's

COASTING BOHEMIA

acting Coquelin had before him an extreme example of marked personal idiosyncrasy. The English actor, and no one was better aware of the fact than himself, was partly hampered in the exercise of his art by physical peculiarities that for many years proved a serious hindrance in his career. But, even if he could have shaken himself wholly free of them, he could never have effaced the personality that lay behind them. It is, indeed, impossible to conceive a more striking contrast than was presented by the two men as I used often to see them in those intimate little supper-parties at the Lyceum. Coquelin, despite his alert and agile intelligence, remained in outward appearance almost defiantly bourgeois, and this indelible stamp of his origin, which art had done nothing to refashion or refine, never showed so clearly as when he stood beside the English actor, who, with no better social title than his own, nevertheless carried about him a nameless sense of race and breeding. I remember one night when they stood up side by side towards the close of a long evening, Coquelin's silhouette bulging in somewhat rotund line as it traversed his ample waistcoat, the comedian was enlarging in earnest and eager tones as to his plans for the future. "I have the intention," he said to Irving, in his halting English, "I have the intention next year to

SITTING AT A PLAY

assume the rôle of *Richard III.*” Irving seemed thoughtful for a moment, and then his long, slender fingers lightly tapping that protuberant outline, he murmured, as though half to himself, “Would you ? I wonder !”

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

ARTHUR SULLIVAN's final claims as a composer can only be settled by time. It is not allowed, even to the expert, to hasten the judgment of posterity, for, as we know from experience, that judgment does not always accord with the verdict even of the most learned of the living. But there is one fact which in Sullivan's case time cannot dispute, and that is the extraordinary influence which he exercised over his generation. There is possibly no Englishman in any realm of art who, during the same period, won the admiration of so many of his fellows: none assuredly whose genius entered with so sweet a welcome into so many English homes.

The art of the musician where it is destined to win any form of popular response has indeed this peculiar prerogative. The processes of its production are hedged around with special technicalities that can be comprehended only by the few, but its completed message owns a universal language that no other art can com-

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

mand. And those of us who know of music no more than the pleasure it confers ought not on that account to withhold our tribute of praise from a master who has charmed us all. It is not only the super-subtle or the obscure which merits respect, and we need not, therefore, be too timorous in confessing our love of that which we are permitted to understand, resting assured that there will remain critics enough to deliver the sterner judgment of the higher courts. And amongst such critics there is a certain section in music, as in literature, or in painting, whose ears are so finely tuned to catch the first whisper of the moderating voice of the time to come, that they are apt to lose their nerve for praise of their contemporaries: others again so beset with the cant of categories that they must needs deplore in the case of every gifted artist who chances also to be popular that his gifts are not engaged in other and loftier employment. We need not, however, be too greatly concerned with censure of this sort; for the accepted formulas of criticism are after all but the reflex of past achievement, and are liable to be recast or enlarged in accordance with the needs and resources of those who have the power to remodel them. Genius, indeed, takes little account of the accepted classifications of the schools, and forms of art that were deemed capable of hold-

COASTING BOHEMIA

ing only so much as they have hitherto contained are suddenly transformed at the touch of new invention, which, in its turn, forges new fetters doomed again to be shattered by the advent of some later individuality.

But it is the personality of the artist rather than the quality of his work that now chiefly concerns us. Of the latter, indeed, the present writer has no title to speak save in terms of grateful admiration, and although it is true of every man of genius that the finest attributes of his nature lie surely enshrined in the fruit of his life's labour, yet those who enjoyed the privilege of Arthur Sullivan's friendship may be pardoned for thinking that the art with which he charmed the world still left unrevealed a deeper fascination in the man himself. So much at least is certain, that only those who knew him well were able to realise the perfect accord that existed between the artist and his work. This, as we know, is not always easy to discover. Life sometimes refuses to surrender any hint of the subtler graces that stand confessed in the artistic record given to the world for its enjoyment ; and, on the other hand, it will as often happen that the product of hand or brain seems sternly to exclude some more intimate charm that friendship alone can claim to have discovered. It was not so in Sullivan's case. The

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

man and the artist were woven of one fabric throughout, and those who have enjoyed the varied phases of his music, from its graver to its lighter strains, may be said to have possessed a faithful index to the purely personal qualities that won the affection of his friends. In the unstudied converse of daily life he exhibited in himself that same swift grace of alternating mood that is so characteristic of his art. He was never afraid of the sudden entry of humour into a discussion of the most serious theme, or of sounding a deeper and graver note, however closely it may have followed upon the heels of recent laughter. It was this that made him the most delightful of companions. His instinct was so sure, his sympathy so finely tuned, that he never missed his footing : his sense of harmony in friendship, as in art, so absolutely irreproachable, that he never struck a jarring note.

A great simplicity and generosity of nature lay, I think, at the root of the rare social charm he possessed. In all my recollections of our companionship I cannot recall a single ill-natured word towards friend or acquaintance, or any bitter criticism of a comrade in art. In another man such restraint might have seemed insipid : in his case it was instinctive and obviously sincere. He was naturally endowed with the genius of friendship, and what he had

COASTING BOHEMIA

to say in the way of serious criticism was delivered with such generous understanding of the claims of other arts with which he was brought into association, that it could never give offence. It was my good fortune more than once to be closely allied with him in the execution of a common task, and those who have written for music will know how constant are the opportunities for friction between the author and the composer. The conflicting claims of music and drama must needs breed keen discussion, and sometimes even marked divergence of view, but with Arthur Sullivan the sense of what was essential in the requirements he had to meet was so quick and so true that it was rarely possible to withhold any concession he might finally see fit to demand.

We met first in the seventies when we were fellow-guests in a country house in Scotland. The house party was a large one, and Sir Arthur Sullivan, laying aside all claim to the kind of consideration to which his reputation entitled him, became at once the life and soul of the varied entertainments that were organised during the evenings of our visit. If there were private theatricals or tableaux vivants he would cheerfully supply the incidental music required for the occasion, and was so little preoccupied with the dignity of his position as composer that he

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

would willingly accompany the songs of every amateur, and when the need arose would seat himself patiently at the piano to provide the music for an improvised dance. We met often in the years that followed, and our acquaintance quickly ripened into a close and lasting friendship. In the riverside houses, which he used then to take during the summer months of the year, he was the most delightful of hosts, and when I was able to accompany him on some of his trips abroad, I found in his companionship a charm that never failed.

In 1894 he was invited by Sir Henry Irving to compose the music for my play of King Arthur, and he became so deeply interested in the subject that he afterwards planned the execution of an opera dealing with the fortunes of Launcelot and Guinevere, for which I was to supply the libretto. Owing to failing health, however, the scheme was never carried to completion, and it is perhaps open to question whether the sustained effort needed for the interpretation of a serious and tragic theme would have so nicely fitted the natural bent of his genius as the lighter framework provided for him by Sir William Gilbert.

Certainly the alliance of these two men proved of rare value to their generation. It is impossible to conceive of talents so differently moulded or so sharply contrasted, a contrast that found an

COASTING BOHEMIA

apt reflection in their strikingly divergent personalities. At the first glance their partnership would hardly seem to promise a fruitful result, and yet it was perhaps out of their very unlikeness that they were enabled to derive something of constant inspiration from one another. Gilbert's humour, perhaps the most individual in his generation, was cloaked beneath a somewhat sullen exterior. The settled gravity of his expression, sometimes almost menacing in the sense of slumbering hostility which it conveyed, gave hardly a hint of those sudden flashes of wit which came like quick lightning from a lowering sky, and was as far removed as possible from the sunny radiance of Sullivan's face, wherein the look of resident geniality stood ready on the smallest provocation to reflect every passing mood of quickly responsive appreciation. Many of the pungent epigrams of Gilbert are well known, and if they were not in every case invented on the spur of the moment, they were uttered with such apparent reluctance to disturb the settled gravity of his demeanour as to produce in the listener the conviction that he himself was the last person to suspect their existence. Very often indeed they were obviously born of the moment of their utterance. I remember our both being present in the stalls of a theatre listening to an actor who was wont to

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

mask his occasional departure from strict sobriety by the adoption of a confidential tone in delivery that sank sometimes to the confines of a whisper, when Gilbert, leaning over my shoulder, remarked, "No one admires the art of Mr. K—— more than I do, but I always feel I am taking a liberty in overhearing what he says." At another time, when he had been invited to attend a concert in aid of the Soldiers' Daughters' Home, he replied with polite gravity that he feared he would not be able to be present at the concert, but that he would be delighted to see one of the soldiers' daughters home after the entertainment. These are only two samples drawn at random from an inexhaustible store of such sayings as must survive in the memory of all who knew him, and the special flavour that is impressed upon them all is equally to be noted in his work for the theatre, more particularly in those lyrical portions of the operas composed in association with Sullivan. In the art of stating a purely prosaic proposition in terms of verse he was indeed without rival. His metrical skill only served to emphasise more deeply the essential unfitness of the poetic form for the message he had to convey; and this unconcealed discordance between the essence of the thought to be expressed and the vehicle chosen for its expression, became irresistible in its humorous appeal even before it had received its

COASTING BOHEMIA

musical setting. And yet that setting, as supplied by Sullivan, gave to the whole a unique value. The sardonic spirit of the writer not only called forth in Sullivan a corresponding humour in the adaptation of serious musical form, but it enabled him to super-add qualities of grace and beauty which deserved to rank as an independent contribution of his own. In this way the combined result possessed a measure of poetic charm and glamour which Gilbert's verse in itself, despite its rare technical qualities, could not pretend to claim, although without the impulse supplied by his more prosaic partner, it may be doubted whether even the finer graces of Sullivan's genius would have found such apt and fortunate expression. Certain it is that where the task imposed upon him lacked the support of this satiric spirit, he often laboured with a reward less entirely satisfying, and, on the other hand, I think Gilbert himself was impelled by the exigencies of their comradeship to indulge a more fanciful invention than was characteristic of his isolated efforts as a writer of verse.

My final association with Sir Arthur Sullivan arose out of my joint authorship with Sir Arthur Pinero in the libretto of *The Beauty Stone*. I think the composer was conscious that the scheme of our work constituted a somewhat violent departure from the lines upon which his

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

success in the theatre had hitherto been achieved. At an earlier time this fact in itself would not, I believe, have proved unwelcome to him, for he had confessed to me that he was sometimes weary of the fetters which Gilbert's particular satiric vein imposed upon him, and his ambition rather impelled him to make trial in a field where, without encountering all the demands incident to Grand Opera, he might be able to give freer rein to the more serious side of his genius. But the adventure, even had our share in the task proved entirely satisfactory to the public, came too late. Poor Sullivan was already a sick man. Sufferings long and patiently endured had sapped his power of sustained energy, and my recollection of the days I passed with him in his villa at Beaulieu, when he was engaged in setting the lyrics I had written, are shadowed and saddened by the impression then left upon me that he was working under difficulties of a physical kind almost too great to be borne. The old genial spirit was still there, the quick humour in appreciation and the ready sympathy in all that concerned our common task, but the sunny optimism of earlier days shone only fitfully through the physical depression that lay heavily upon him, and when a little later we came to the strenuous times of rehearsal in the theatre, one was forced to observe the strain he seemed

COASTING BOHEMIA

constantly in need of putting upon himself in order to get through the irksome labour of the day. There were indeed brighter intervals when he seemed in nothing changed from the man as I first knew him, but on such happier moments would quickly follow long seasons of depression, showing itself sometimes in an irritability of temper so foreign to his real nature as to raise in the minds of his friends feelings of deep disquietude and anxiety. But the Sullivan of those moods of dejection is not the man whose portrait lives in the memory of those who knew him. It is easier to think of him in those earlier days when the constant urbanity of his outlook upon the world was lightened by a laughing humour constantly inspired by sympathy and affection.

THE JUNIOR OF THE CIRCUIT

WHEN I first joined the Northern circuit in the year 1872, it covered a wider area than is now allotted to it. We used at that time to begin operations at Appleby, journeying thence from Durham to Newcastle, Carlisle, Lancaster, Manchester, and Liverpool. The members of the Local Bar in the two last-named cities were already strong and powerful, but they had not yet absorbed so large a share of the business of the assizes as they now enjoy. It was Charles Crompton—with whom I had read in chambers—who secured for me the coveted position of Junior of the circuit, and the first occasion on which I set out to discharge the somewhat anomalous duties of my office I shared rooms at Durham with the present Mr. Justice Kennedy, who, I think, had himself been a candidate for the post.

I have referred to the duties of the Junior of the circuit as being somewhat anomalous, because although, as his title would imply, he

COASTING BOHEMIA

is always chosen from the newest of its recruits, tradition dowers him with a figment of authority which is altogether out of proportion to any personal qualifications he may chance to possess. He disputes the leadership of the circuit with the leader himself, and is assumed to hold specially in his keeping the interests of the Junior Bar as opposed to whatever arrogant claims may be put forward by the more fortunate wearers of the silken gown. To this defiant attitude, where the opportunity for defiance was in any sense possible, I was constantly urged by the members of the Junior Bar, whose cause I was supposed to champion ; and it was deemed a duty, which no Junior of spirit could safely ignore, that on any public occasion when he had to stand up as spokesman of the circuit, he should depreciate, with all the resources at his disposal, both the intellectual prowess and the professional bearing of the eminent Queen's counsel who were assembled at assize. The dignity thus assigned to him was, of course, only half-humorously entertained by his comrades of both ranks, but so much of reality still attached to the office that the holder of it, if he chose to take advantage of the situation, found ample opportunity for the trial and exercise of such gifts of oratory as he might be fortunate enough to possess. Wherever and whenever the members of the circuit were entertained, the

THE JUNIOR OF THE CIRCUIT

Junior had to brace himself to his allotted task ; and although at the time I had been assigned no opportunity of airing my powers of speech in open court, these festive gatherings, which occurred in nearly every separate county we visited, left me free for the crude practice of an art that had always profoundly attracted me.

The leaders of the Northern circuit, whose virtues I was called upon to assail, numbered at that time some of the most distinguished representatives at the Bar. Herschell, Russell, Holker, and Sam Pope had all either attained or were nearing the zenith of their fame ; while among the Junior Bar it may suffice to cite the names of the late Lord Selby (then Mr. Gully), Mr. Henn Collins (the late Master of the Rolls), Lord Mersey, and Mr. Justice Kennedy. It was a privilege to watch the work in court in which the powers of some of these giants of the profession were daily called into exercise. I used to hear some of my contemporaries sigh over the weary ordeal of having to sit and listen to cases in which they were not concerned ; a little later, in the courts at Westminster, I sometimes shared that feeling of fatigue ; but my experience of two years of circuit life yields few dull memories. The proceedings on circuit are perhaps more concentrated in their interest than can, in the nature of things, be claimed for the more scattered

COASTING BOHEMIA

and diversified arena of the metropolis ; one is brought more nearly into touch with the chief actors in the drama, and the incidents of the day are renewed and discussed at the Bar mess in the evening. It is possible there to gauge and to measure the social qualities of the men whose public performances in court are still under consideration, and to link the more human side of this or that great advocate, as it was frankly and freely exhibited in those hours when we sat at wine after dinner, with the purely intellectual gifts that had been set in action during the day. No one, for instance, who knew Mr. Russell (afterwards Lord Russell of Killowen) only by his conduct of a case in court, where the qualities of an imperious temper joined to an unrelenting gravity of manner coloured and dominated the impression which even his most eloquent speeches produced, could have readily divined that he possessed at the same time a vein of genuine sentiment that, in his more sympathetic moods, showed itself as being no less clearly an integral part of his nature. And yet this softer side of his character was often shown at the circuit mess, and I have more than once seen his eyes moistened with tears as he would sing, without any great pretence of art, one or more of Moore's sentimental Irish melodies.

Nor could it have been readily guessed that,

THE JUNIOR OF THE CIRCUIT

beneath the look of slumbering power which marked Holker's personality, there lurked a quickened sense of humour of which he could make agile display when the needs of the social occasion called it into being. The almost daily contest between these two men, so differently equipped, and yet often so equally matched, formed one of the most interesting subjects of study to the youngster whose idle days were passed in court; for down the length of the circuit, from Durham to Liverpool, there were few causes of any magnitude or importance in which they were not both engaged, and their divergent personalities and varying methods remain to me now as an unfading recollection. It was sometimes difficult to realise that Holker owned any real claims to eloquence until the cumulative effect of his untiring insistence found its reflex in the favourable verdict of the jury. That, at any rate, was the first impression.

It was only afterwards that the student was able to realise what a wealth of intellectual resource and unsleeping vigilance lay masked beneath the somewhat uncouth exterior in which the immobile and unresponsive features gave scarcely a hint of the quick insight into human nature, and the swift grasp of what was essential either in the strength or the weakness of his cause. Grace of oratory he certainly could never

COASTING BOHEMIA

boast, but his very disability in this respect seemed sometimes to serve him as a source of power. His humble and deprecating manner, as though he were struggling with a task too great for him, made an irresistible appeal to the sympathies of a Northern jury, who would seem silently bidden to come to the aid of this giant in distress, and who were never, I think, aware that in leaning towards what they deemed the weaker side, they were, in fact, the victims of the most consummate art which cloaked itself in almost blundering simplicity of phrase. Russell's more brilliant gifts as an orator often beat in vain against what seemed at first sight to be the ill-adjusted and cumbrous methods of his adversary ; while at other times the superior grace and vehemence of his style carried him safely to victory. Even at that date it seemed to me clear that he was destined to take his place as the most distinguished advocate at the Bar, and those who had the privilege of watching his career at that time had not long to wait to witness the fulfilment of their prophecy. I think of him always as an advocate, for although his natural gift of speech might have fitted him to win renown in almost any arena, it may nevertheless be justly said of him that it was the office of advocacy alone which furnished the needed impulse for the display of his highest gifts as an orator. It

THE JUNIOR OF THE CIRCUIT

is possibly for that reason that his career in Parliament never quite justified his commanding reputation at the Bar, and it is certainly true—as I myself have witnessed more than once—that in the discharge of those lighter duties that fall to a speaker on festal occasions he moved with little ease of style and with far inferior effect.

It was the concrete issue, carrying with it a full sense of responsibility, that was needed to set in motion the great forces of character and intellect that were his by right. It was the sense of the duel that pricked him forward to the display of his powers at their best ; and it is, I think, this same sense of the duel that forms the supreme element of interest to those who are called upon to watch the conduct of a great trial in which grave issues are at stake. To the trained mind of the lawyer an intricate case, in which only civil interests are involved, provides perhaps the fullest opportunity for watching the expert sword-play between two leaders who are fitly armed for their task ; but from the more human and dramatic point of view it is the criminal court in an assize town that more often attracts the presence of the younger student. A murder trial, where the man whose life is in the balance stands before you in the dock during the long hours of a protracted hearing, becomes, as the case advances, absorbing, and even oppressive,

COASTING BOHEMIA

in its interest. The very air of the crowded court seems charged with the message of this one human story ; it is difficult, as the sordid and pitiable facts are gradually revealed, to conceive that there is any other drama than that which is being enacted within those four walls. And as the trial drags its course, with each new link in the evidence seeming to forge a chain that is gradually drawing closer around the wretched being who stands before you in the dock, the intensity of the situation becomes so great and so strained that one is almost tempted to believe that the whole world is awaiting that one word from the lips of the jury which shall set him free once more or send him to his doom.

I can recall many such trials during my brief service on the Northern circuit, and sometimes when the hearing outran the hours commonly allotted for the sittings of the court, and when judge and jury, by mutual consent, had agreed that the end should be reached before the end of the day, the inherent solemnity of the scene would receive an added sense of awe and terror as the fading daylight gradually deserted the building, and the creeping shadows half-shrouded the faces of the spectators eagerly and silently intent upon every word that fell from the judge in his summing-up—whose grave countenance, only partly illumined by the candles that had been

THE JUNIOR OF THE CIRCUIT

set upon his desk, stood in dreadful contrast with that of the prisoner who confronted him with ashen face like that of a spectre in the darkness. And once I remember, when the fatal verdict had been given, and the judge had passed to the dread task of pronouncing sentence—a task never in my experience discharged without the signs of visible emotion—the terror of the scene was still further heightened as the prisoner, shrieking for mercy, held fast to the bar of the dock, and was only at last removed by force to the cells below.

Such memories count among the sadder experiences of circuit life, and were relieved by much else in the ordinary work of the day that leaves a happier recollection. I believe the circuit mess has now greatly fallen from its former estate; in my time it flourished exceedingly. At each of the great towns we kept a well-stocked cellar of our own, and it was the business of the junior to see that the members dining were kept well supplied with the wine of their choice. The increase of the Local Bar in many of the great centres has no doubt considerably changed all this—with some loss, as it must be, of the sense of good-fellowship which then bound us together. But at that time those nightly gatherings, at which nearly every member of the circuit dined, kept alive a kind of school-

COASTING BOHEMIA

boy feeling that infected the graver leaders no less than the Junior Bar. The dinner-hour brought with it always something of a festal spirit, and there were special occasions, such as grand nights, that were wholly given over to a frolic mood. We had our accredited Poet Laureate, poor Hugh Shield, who has now joined the majority, and whose duty it was to provide the fitting doggerel to be recited at the mess. Nor were these effusions too strictly judged, from a purely literary point of view, if they were sufficiently besprinkled with pungent personal references to such members as were deemed to afford fitting material for the exercise of the poet's humour. Another of those who was a prodigal contributor to the humours of the evening was M'Connell, who afterwards became judge of the Middlesex Sessions. And even the leader was not allowed to escape his contribution, although it was sometimes hinted that his lighter essays in prose and verse were supplied to him by some one of his friends whose professional services were not so fully employed.

Though the barrister's calling did not long hold me in its service, I have always retained the keenest interest in the triumphs of its distinguished representatives. Perhaps of no other profession can it be so truly said that it is fitted to claim the undivided allegiance of the strongest

THE JUNIOR OF THE CIRCUIT

character and the keenest intellect ; possibly, for that reason it leaves the most indelible mark upon its followers. A great lawyer, in whatever arena he may be encountered, never quite divests himself of the habit of the law ; just as there are some men who, by a natural academic inclination, remain always and obviously members of their University, no matter how far removed may be the ultimate field of their activity. But if a lawyer is always a lawyer, it is perhaps for that very reason that he is often such excellent company, and this, I think, applies especially to members of the Common Law Bar, who do not incur the same danger of becoming enmeshed in the enclosing net of legal subtleties. With them the study and knowledge of character becomes often a greater element of strength, than a profound knowledge of legal principles.

BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM

IF a writer happens to be an angler, he will often find himself when in holiday mood on the banks of a trout stream. There is long warrant for the association of these two callings. Since the day of Izaak Walton, whom we still follow with such delight in his rambles beside the Dove or the Lea, the hand whose chief office it is to hold the pen has again and again, in hours of leisure, been found wielding the rod. We have modern examples in Charles Kingsley, whose "Chalk Stream Studies" may perhaps outlast many of his more ambitious essays in literature ; and Mr. Froude has left among his miscellaneous writings a delightful record of a day's fishing on a Hertfordshire stream. William Black, the novelist, never tired of recounting to me his various adventures in northern waters ; and among modern writers, Mr. Andrew Lang may also be cited as an unwearying follower of the gentle art. I think, indeed, the alliance I have noted has in it something more than the accident of

BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM

individual taste. There is no need for the long leisure of a set holiday to enable the man of letters to turn to his favourite recreation. The more violent forms of sport, which exact the devotion of a day, or of a series of days, require the enforced cessation of all forms of literary toil ; but if the angler is fortunately located, work and play are by no means inconsistent and—granted that he is strong enough to resist during the earlier hours of the day the alluring call of the gentle south-west breeze with its alternating changes of sun and cloud—the morning may still hold him chained to his desk, sure of the reward of his industry in the evening ramble by the stream. And if his success as an angler be not too complete—and how often it is not !—the subject of his morning task will often renew itself in the happy solitude that counts among the many joys which angling can boast.

My own apprenticeship as a fisherman was passed among the Cumberland hills. Earlier experience had taken me no further than an occasional day on the upper reaches of the Thames, but even this cockney form of the sport in its annual recurrence was looked forward to with delight ; and though the reward was no more than a few gudgeon, with a rare and occasional perch, such puny triumphs already whetted my appetite for the day when I should

COASTING BOHEMIA

be admitted to the deeper mysteries of the fly-fisher's art. My first master in this higher branch of the profession was no hero save to me. He was a gentleman of unsettled occupation, who dwelt in a cottage close beside Grasmere Churchyard, where Wordsworth lies buried ; and by the more orderly characters of the village his wayward habits of life, involving constantly recurring lapses into inebriety, were regarded with stern reprobation. But for me, at the time, any doubt of the moral integrity of his character was silenced by the indisputable fact that he was an unrivalled professor of his art. I accepted him without misgiving as my comrade and my master, and this at least may be urged in mitigation of the harsher judgment of the village, that the night's debauch, of which I was myself too often the reluctant witness, never hindered him from appearing under our cottage window as soon after dawn as I was prepared to set out on our daily expedition. His stock-in-trade as a fisherman was of the homeliest and scantiest description. His rod, consisting of two parts rudely spliced together, had been fashioned by himself ; and by the side of the beck or the mountain tarn, with fingers that alcohol still left incomparably steady for their task, he would forge, with such rough process of imitation as he could command, the fly that he thought best suited for the conditions

BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM

of the water or the day. In his company my brother and I rambled far afield. There was no upland stream or lonely pool within a circuit of five miles where our untried skill was not assiduously exercised. At that time the lakes and rivers of Cumberland were not so unceasingly flogged by the summer visitor, and there were sequestered haunts well known to him that were scarcely visited by the tourist at all.

One specially favoured spot was a tiny lake called Harrop Tarn, surrounded by a quaking bog, that lay in the hills above Thirlmere. My revered master, though a genuine sportsman, was not wholly irreproachable in regard to some delicate questions that lay on the border-land of poaching, and it was at Harrop, where the bank was in most places unapproachable, that he initiated us in the subtle mysteries of cross-lining. Be it counted to his honour, however, that these occasional departures from the stricter etiquette of his calling were never undertaken without enjoining on us the most solemn pledge of secrecy, a fact that at the time gave to the delights of almost certain success the added excitement of some unknown personal risk and danger.

But the Lake district, it must be confessed, was even then no paradise for the trout-fisher. It satisfied well enough the moderate ambition of a boy, who was still a bungler in the

COASTING BOHEMIA

art, and it served, at any rate, as fitting ground for that patient apprenticeship which is necessary to all who desire to become proficient in the science and practice of casting a fly. Scotland, a few years later, offered a wider field, with the occasional chance of larger triumphs; and it was there that I first became conscious of my ability to meet my desired prey upon more equal terms. The upper reaches of the Tay, as it runs between Crianlarich and Killin, became for many years my favourite hunting-ground. The little inn at Luib was our resting-place, and Loch Dochart, which lay five miles up the stream, our favourite resort when wind and weather served. I can recall no sense of fatigue from the ten miles of mountain road that we had to trudge by the time our day's work was done, though we were often drenched to the skin before we reached the inn at night. Nor did the inn itself, at that time, offer absolute protection against the weather, and sometimes when the storm beat heavily upon the uncertain roof we had to make our way upstairs to our rooms under the shelter of an umbrella.

Some years later I found my way to the Western Highlands as the invited guest of a dear friend who was almost as keen a fisherman as myself. I had often heard of the *Salmo ferox*, whose identity as a separate species is, I believe, still

BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM

in dispute, but it was not until one memorable day upon Loch Awe that I encountered the monster in person. A fair morning had changed suddenly to a wild storm of wind and rain, and the surface of the lake was lashed into the semblance of a mimic sea. Fly-fishing was out of the question, and our gillie in despair suggested that we might put out the trolling rod with a large phantom minnow for bait, while we tried to make our way against the wind back to the landing-place. I do not think there was any expectation even on his part that the endeavour would yield any result, and I, who held the rod in hands that were nearly frozen by the beating rain, was entirely unprepared for the violent and sudden tug that nearly wrenched it from my grasp. But when that tug came, no one thought any more about the storm, and for nearly half an hour of throbbing excitement we were engaged in a fierce struggle that seemed at any moment likely to end in our ignominious defeat. Again and again the great trout rose to the surface and sprang high into the air, and then, with sudden change of tactics, it would dive, as it would seem, to the floor of the lake, and lie in sullen resistance to such pressure as we dared put upon the line. But the victory long delayed was ours at last, not, however, I will admit, without some element of disappointment in the

COASTING BOHEMIA

appearance and quality of our captive. A long, lank fish, that scaled something between 8 lb. and 9 lb., but which, if it had been in condition, ought to have mounted to as much as half its weight again : an ugly fish, with the mouth and jaws of a pike, it still left us in wonder where it had found the force to offer so stubborn a resistance.

An occasional monster during a day which seems to offer the prospect of only smaller fry is one of the pleasurable excitements of loch-fishing in Scotland. Only a few years ago I set out in pleasant company from a cottage beside the shores of Mull, to make a picnic near one of the little lochs that lay about five miles up the hill. Two or three of us had taken our rods, but with no thought of a larger capture than the small brown trout and *Fontinalis* with which we knew these hill lochs were well stocked. The day was busily spent, and most of the party had already started homeward on the downward path, when the gillie who was with us said that he knew of another little loch about a mile over the hill, where rumour had it that there were certain larger trout which had never been induced to rise to the fly. My host and I, with one other companion, determined to make trial of this unconquered pool, and set out across the heather just as the sun was begin-

BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM

ning to dip behind the shelter of the hill. It had been a scorching day, and was a lovely evening. As we came in sight of the little loch it seemed to us both that if these reluctant fish were ever to be lured to the net, the present was the most propitious occasion for the adventure.

It chanced that my friend had in his case a fine cast of drawn gut with a small floating fly, which a month or two before he had used on a southern stream; I myself had chosen an Alder of a pattern I had found efficient two or three years before on some of the little lochs above Glenmuich. Our gillie knew nothing of the mysteries of the dry fly, though he had heard tell of its wonders, and it was indeed mainly at his instigation that we were tempted to present this lure on the present occasion. We threw our lines almost simultaneously far out into the tranquil surface of the pool, but the luck was with my rival, for his fly had scarcely reached the water when there came a sudden flop and a splash, and it was evident by the mighty rush, that took out nearly the whole of the line from his reel, that the legend related to us by the keeper had a solid foundation in fact. It is astonishing what strength and persistence these larger lake trout display. A fish of equal weight in the Test or the Itchen

COASTING BOHEMIA

would most assuredly have been brought to bank within half an hour or less, but on this occasion it was nearer three hours before our capture was complete. A part of our difficulty was due to the fact that the tackle was of the finest, so that it was impossible to put any strain upon the line ; and even, at the last, when the struggle was practically at an end, there came the added difficulty that the long gloaming had fallen into darkness, and the application of the landing-net became a hazardous operation. Twice the line nearly parted when the fish was within less than a yard of the bank ; but when it was safely netted it proved to be a splendid trout of something over $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb., in perfection of colour and condition. It was under a moonless sky and in pitch darkness that we picked our way amid the rough boulders down to the valley below, where we were met within a mile of home by the rest of our party, who had already set out with lanterns to come to our rescue.

There is not often occasion for the use of the dry fly in the Highlands, though I remember employing it with some success one evening at Kinloch-Rannoch, where the waters of the river run with tranquil flow from the lake. But it is a delightful branch of the fly-fisher's craft, of unending fascination to those who have once gained a mastery over its secrets. For some

BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM

years I was in happy possession of a little cottage on the upper reaches of the Lea, where the narrow stream, in places no more than a few yards across, gave no hint, save to the initiated, of the heavy fish which found a home and haunt under its banks. It was, indeed, only during the annual rise of the May-fly that this little river made anything like a full announcement of its thriving population. During the weeks before and after this recurrent season of debauch, there was little chance of a heavy basket, and for that reason it made a delightful home for any one occupied in writing, to whom at those seasons the banks of the stream offered no compelling temptation. Two or three hours in the evening after work was done sufficed to test the chances of sport, and I was amply satisfied if I returned to the cottage at nightfall with a brace or a brace and a half of handsome trout. But with the advent of the May-fly my desk, I confess, was deserted. From my windows, as I tried to write, I could hear and see the constant splashing in the stream which proclaimed that the fish were already on the feed. The cottage and the stretch of river that belonged to it are, alas ! no longer mine, and I am told that there, as in so many other southern streams, the rise of the fly is no more what it was ten years ago. In those days, on a favourable morning, the meadows that

COASTING BOHEMIA

bordered the water were all alight with myriads of these beautiful ephemorae, and the stream itself, as far as the eye could trace its course, literally alive with the boil and splash of the feeding fish. For every fly that touched the water there seemed to be an attendant and expectant trout. Larger fish, that kept to their deeper haunts at other seasons, now took up their stations in mid-stream, and the veriest tiro in these favouring circumstances could scarcely go home with an empty basket. But there are days of luck and days of disaster at all seasons : days even during the May-fly time when the most skilful fisherman has sometimes to confess a series of mishaps, while a companion not a hundred yards away is crowned with good fortune. When the weed is heavy—and for my part I have a liking for the presence of the weed, and deprecate the close shearing of the stream which is too often the modern habit—it is inevitable that some of the heavier fish should make their escape. The most fortunate morning that I can recall was a basket of twelve fish, weighing in all $28\frac{1}{2}$ lb. ; and the largest trout that has ever fallen to my rod there, though by no means the largest known to the river, was within an ounce of 4 lb.

In days of early spring or late summer, when there is no rise of fly to tempt the angler, the

BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM

keeper and I used to find congenial occupation in ridding the stream of some of the heavy jack that were apt in those days to come from Luton Hoo. It was he who first initiated me in the art, of which he himself was a past master, of securing these marauding cannibals by the aid of a running wire. Like many a good keeper, he had been in his boyhood something of a poacher, and even in those later days, when his morality was beyond reproach, he retained certain stealthy and secret ways that dated from the lawless times of his youth. At any likely bend of the stream, where a deeper pool rendered probable the presence of a jack, and when I might perhaps be deploring the fact that we had left our wires at the cottage, he would suddenly to my surprise produce an ash sappling that lay hidden in the long grass, not three yards away, with the running noose already attached to its point. Nothing could exceed the quickness of his vision in detecting the neighbourhood of his prey, and nothing could equal the incomparable steadiness of his hand as he reached far out across the stream and deftly passed the wire over the head of the jack as it lay half asleep in the sun. And then, before I was aware that the operation was complete, with a sudden wrench that almost cut the fish in twain he would lift a jack of 4 lb. or 5 lb. high into the air, and fling it over

COASTING BOHEMIA

his head on to the bank. It was perhaps the recollection of his earlier poaching days that made him so zealous and watchful during the spawning season, which offers to the poacher his favourite opportunity. At these times he would spend long hours of the night beside the stream, never seeming to grudge any demand that was made upon his rest, and it was while he was so employed that he made capture of a large otter, whose marauding expeditions he had long reason to suspect. Otters, I think, are not common on that part of the Lea ; certainly this was the only specimen brought to my knowledge during my long tenancy of the cottage. But even a single otter can work ruinous havoc among the trout, as we had then reason to know, and it was therefore with pardonable pride that, when I came down to breakfast one morning, he laid his dead victim out to view on the little lawn in front of the door.

I sometimes think that those who haunt the country, without conscious sense of its many beauties, are apt to learn and love its beauties best. How often the memory of a day's shooting is indissolubly linked with the pattern of a fading autumn sky, when we have stood at the edge of a stubble field wondering whether the growing twilight will suffice for the last drive. And if this is true of other forms of

BY THE SIDE OF A STREAM

sport, it is everlastingly true of fishing. There is hardly a remembered day on a Scotch loch, or beside a southern stream, which has not stamped upon it some unfading image of landscape beauty. It was not for that we set forth in the morning, for then the changing lights in a dappled sky counted for no more than a promise of good sport ; during those earlier hours there is no feeling but a feeling of impatience to be at work ; and the splash of a rising trout, before the rod is joined and ready and the line run through its rings, is heard with a sense of half-resentment lest we should have missed the favourable moment of the day. But as the hours pass, the mind becomes more tranquilly attuned to its surroundings. The keenness of the pursuit is still there, but little by little the still spirit of the scene invades our thoughts, and as we tramp home at nightfall the landscape that was unregarded when we set forth upon our adventure now seems to wrap itself like a cloak around us with a spell that it is impossible to resist. A hundred such visions, born of an angler's wanderings, come back to me across the space of many years. I can see the reeds etched against a sunset sky, as they spring out of a little loch in the hills above the inn at Tummel. And then, with a changing flash of memory, the broad waters of Rannoch

COASTING BOHEMIA

are outspread, fringed by its purple hills. And then, again, in a homelier frame, I can see the willows that border the Lea, their yellow leaves turned to gold under the level rays of the evening sun ; and I can hear the nightingale in the first notes of its song as I cross the plank bridge that leads me homeward to the cottage by the stream.

INDEX

- Alma - Tadema, Sir Lawrence,
26-41
- Barnard, Fred, 217, 218
- Barry, James, 119
- Beauty Stone*, the, 251
- Bell, Professor : Mrs. Siddons as
Lady Macbeth, 167
- Bernhardt, Sarah, 233, 237, 238
- Black, William, 264
- Blake, William, 120
- Bleheris : story of the Holy
Grail, 148
- Boaden, James : Mrs. Siddons as
Lady Macbeth, 167
- Bohemia Past and Present, 1-11
- Bough, Sam, 131
- Bret Harte, 215
- Brough, Robert Barnabas, 119
- Brown, Ford Madox, 126
- Brown, Oliver Madox, 52
- Browning, Robert, 12
- Burne-Jones, Edward, 56-88 ;
friendship with Alma-Tadema,
31 ; appreciation of Rossetti,
49, 56, 86 ; paintings referred
to, 60 ; friendship with William
Morris, 86 ; paintings at Roman
Exhibition, 127 ; Du Maurier's
opinion of, 217
- Caldecott, Randolph, 216
- Clayden, P. W., 164
- Clint, George, 109
- Collins, Henn, 255
- Constable, John, 130
- Coquelin, B. C., 233, 234, 240
- Cotman, John Sell, 131
- Cox, David, 131
- Craven, Hawes, 207
- Crestien de Troyes—story of the
Holy Grail, 148
- Crome, John, 131
- Crompton, Charles, 253
- De Hoogh, 33
- Desclée, Mme., 237
- Dickens, Charles, 215
- Du Maurier, George, 216
- Duse, Eleanora, 238
- Dyce, William, 125
- English School of Painting at the
Roman Exhibition, 101-133
- Etty, William, 120
- Faulkner, Charles, 86
- Faust*, Irving's preparations for,
206
- Fletcher, Charles, 232
- Fletcher, Mr., 164
- Frith, William Powell, 107
- Froude, James Anthony, 264
- Furse, 119
- Fuseli, Johann Caspar, 119

COASTING BOHEMIA

- Gainsborough, Thomas, 113,
114, 115, 129
Geddes, Andrew, 118
George Eliot, 142
Gilbert, Sir William, 247-250
Gregory, E. J., 109
- Haydon, B. R., 119
Herschel, Sir F., 255
Hogarth, William, 104-106
Holker, Sir John, 255-257
Holl, Frank, 119
Hook, 131
Hoppner, John, 113, 118
Humour, A Sense of, 213-226
Hunt, Holman, 44, 124; pre-
Raphaelite movement, 43, 50,
121
- Irving, Sir Henry, 199-212,
233, 235, 240
- Junior of the Circuit, the, 253-
263
- Keene, Charles, 216
Kemble, Mrs., 163
Kennedy, Mr. Justice, 253, 255
King Arthur, Mr. Carr's version
of, for Henry Irving, 210;
music for, written by Sir
Arthur Sullivan, 247
Kingsley, Charles, 264
- Lang, Andrew, 264
Lawrence, Sir Thomas, 118
Lawson, Cecil, 131
Leech, John, 216, 217
Leighton, Sir Frederick, 19, 35,
128, 234; paintings at Roman
Exhibition, 129
Lewis, John Frederick, 109
Leyland, Fred, referred to, 52
Lorraine, Claude, 131
- Macbeth*, 162-198; Irving's read-
ing of, 205
Maclise, Daniel, 108
McConnell, W. R., 262
Malory, Sir Thomas, 147
Mason, 131
May, Phil, 217
Meredith, George, 134-146
Mersey, Lord, 255
Millais, Sir John Everett, 13-
25, 65; pre-Raphaelite move-
ment, 43, 50, 121; paintings
referred to, 23, 44, 123;
Rossetti's praise of, 51; por-
trait painting, 119; paintings
at Roman Exhibition, 123;
Du Maurier's praise of, 217
Montgomery, Walter, 231
Morris, William, 86
- Nutt, Alfred: story of the Holy
Grail, 150, 160
- Opie, John, 119
Orchardson, Sir William, 106
- "Parsifal": origin of legend,
etc., 147-161
- Pettie, John, 110
Phelps, Edmund (jun.), 231
Phelps, Samuel, 230
Pope, Sam, 255
Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—
aims and achievements of,
etc., 5, 42, 50, 55, 120, 125
- Rae, Mr., 45
Raeburn, Sir Henry, 113, 118
Ramsay, Allan, 118
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 110, 114,
116
Ristori, Mme., 234
Roman Exhibition, English school
of painting at, 101-133

INDEX

- Romney, George, 113, 117
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 42-55 ;
 paintings referred to, 46, 122 ;
 praise of Millais, 51 ; en-
 couragement and appreciation
 of Burne-Jones, 56, 57 ; pre-
 Raphaelite movement, 43, 50,
 55, 121 ; paintings at Roman
 Exhibition, 122 ; Du Maurier's
 opinion of, 217
 Ruskin, John, 125
 Russell of Killowen, Lord, 255,
 256, 258
 Salvini, Tomaso, 234
 Sandys, Frederick, 119, 126
 Selby, Lord (Mr. Gully), 255
 Sex in Tragedy—*Macbeth*, 162-
 198, 205
 Shield, Hugh, 262
 Siddons, Mrs. : personation of
 Lady Macbeth, 166-170, 205
 Sitting at a Play, 227-241
 Sullivan, Sir Arthur, 242-252
 Terriss, William, 202
 Terry, Ellen, 201, 210, 239
 Terry, Kate, 232
 Tissot, Amédée Angelot, referred
 to, 31
 Toole, J. L., 220-226
Tristram and Iseult, 147
 Trout-fishing, 264-277
 Turner, Joseph Mallord William,
 131-132 ; paintings at Roman
 Exhibition, 131
 Walker, Frederick, 131
 Watts, G. F., 119, 128
 Wauchier : story of the Holy
 Grail, 148
 Weston, Miss Jessie : story of
 the Holy Grail, 150, 156
 Whistler, James McNeill, 89-100
 Wilkie, Sir David, 106
 Wills, W. G., 206, 210
 Wilson, Richard, 130, 131
 Wolfram von Eschenbach : story
 of the Holy Grail, 149
 Zoffany, Johann, 109

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